

**'Religion and Spirituality within Environmental Communities:
place and significance in the UK context'**

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Abstract

This study examines religion and spirituality within environmental communities in the UK. Through the detailed study of three communities, 35 in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations, the substantive forms of religion and spirituality present are for the first time comprehensively documented. Individual beliefs and practices are examined alongside shared religious traditions, collective rituals and shrines within communal spaces. The place of religion and spirituality is mapped within communities using the concept of four realms (Inner, Personal, Social and Public). A comparative approach is employed to explore the differences between urban and rural contexts. Two strong community discourses involving religion and spirituality within the rural context, hitherto not commented upon, are examined in detail. The first relates to differences in strategic tendency (spiky-fluffy), these are in fact found to emanate from the previous Environmental Direct Action (EDA) movement. The second centres upon the Art of Mentoring Movement in which a number of community members had participated. Through detailed analysis the study describes how this organisation differed from the other spiritual traditions being practiced within the rural environmental communities. Throughout the study I suggest that many of the prominent features of environmental communities are similar to those identified in the EDA movement UK and Western countercultural movements of the 1960s. It is in regard to these social movements that I posit New Social Movement theories in particular help explain the presence of multiple ideologies within all three communities. Towards the end of the study I analyse the functional traits of religion and spirituality. All aspects of community bonding are considered including ideology, cultural practices, normative practices and body experiences. It is within the latter category that I suggest a type of 'organic embodied solidarity' exists within the rural context.

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~ Chapter 1 ~ Introduction

Environmental communities have from their beginnings in the late 1970s developed into a consistent and important feature within environmental movements worldwide. Relatively little academic research has been directed towards these communities generally, and even less in relation to the forms of religion and spirituality they support. Although this deficiency is not so apparent within literature produced by movement participants, there is still sparse reflection on the functional aspects that religion and spirituality may be playing. This study therefore seeks to comprehensively document the substantive forms of religion and spirituality present within three environmental communities in England. Having elaborated upon the forms of religion and spirituality present in both urban and rural contexts it will go on to analyse their functional aspects. In addressing these two broad areas specific questions arise. What are the differences between urban and rural communities in relation to religion? Does the organic environment in the rural context impact the way community members practice their religious traditions? Where there are differences in religious traditions within the same community how has this occurred and how are they accommodated? What is bonding community members together and what, if any, role is religion and spirituality playing?

Although the central focus of this study is upon religion and spirituality¹, the task necessitates consideration of interrelated aspects such as political opinions and cultural practices. These wider concerns had to be considered given the relatively novel phenomenon of bonding a community around the environmental theme. The environmental philosophies constructed from the late 20th century onward have opened up new cognitive spaces (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 55, 77). A wealth of new philosophies related to the environment and nature were developed in this period; however as they became more popular and influential in the mainstream culture they have been increasingly channelled towards conventional political frameworks

¹ I will explain below, in Chapter 1.2 Key Concepts, how I am defining both religion and spirituality.

(Scott, 1990, p. 107). It is in this complex and contested territory that environmental communities have been formed.

Further complexity is added by the fact that in past centuries alternative communities have tended to coalesce around religious or political objectives, that is focussing on the 'Human – Deity' or 'Human – Human' relationship respectively. A frequent claim within environmental movements and environmental communities is that the focus and passion dedicated to environmental concern and nature in fact reduces the influence of political and religious concepts (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, pp. 107, 177; Scott, 1990, p. 81; Tomalin, 2009, p. 108). They are therefore demoted, displaced or transcended by a more ultimate and significant concern, the 'Human – Nature' relationship. This study challenges such claims, demonstrating that religion and spirituality, although generally considered secondary in relation to community cohesion, do in fact have a significant place and function within environmental communities, especially in the rural context. The substantive approach employed below reveals a degree of complexity, instances where political and religious concepts are conflated or assimilated and certainly do not always fall into neat categories. Contemporary paganism and Eco-Paganism, for instance, are found to place religious and spiritual concepts within nature, complicating previously defined categories.

In a similar manner the boundaries between religion and non-religion are found to be complex, with some community members seemingly occupying stances that could be defined as both religious and non-religious, when using commonly used definitions. Again some movement participants and community members claim that such divisions are not important to their communities and movements; it is claimed they are transcended by more ultimate concerns about the environment and nature. To explore this and other claims the study documents community members' attitudes to science and technology. This particular enquiry is found to be most relevant within the urban context where religion is resisted. Through analysis of the interviews and consideration of theories relating to spiritual experiences the study offers one plausible explanation for complex attitudes and behaviour that appears to blur the religious-nonreligious distinction.

In the latter stages of the thesis attention is turned towards the functional role of religion and spirituality. Community tensions that have developed over time are examined: the hopes of some community members for a greater spiritual unity and open criticism of religion and spirituality by others. As these functional aspects are analysed, a distinction between religion and

spirituality is maintained. This distinction, which will be outlined in detail below in the key concepts section, focuses on the way community members are employing these terms and how they relate to particular functional aspects of religion. Broadly speaking, spirituality is associated with individual spiritual experiences whereas religion is associated with the organised institutional aspects of religion. The functional aspects of this differentiation are explored in detail, in particular the theme of authority: the authority of the individual, the authority of the small group, and the authority of the religious tradition. It is acknowledged from the outset that the distinction is not always precise: some beliefs and practices could be identified as both religious and spiritual. Nevertheless, the general differentiation is thought useful in clarifying particular functional features.

Another important functional consideration is community cohesion. In pursuing a possible functional role for religion and spirituality the study asks precisely what is bonding these environmental communities together. A broad approach is adopted, one which includes political concerns and cultural/normative practices. The ideological concepts present are explored in detail, including environmental, political and religious ideologies. These are found to be heterogeneous and not surprisingly very similar to the environmental movements that inspired the formation of environmental communities. Not all community bonding was found to be related to ideologies and what emerged in both urban and rural contexts was a particularly strong collective identity in relation to lived practice and culture. The day-to-day actions which expressed environmental concern and social interactions were found to contain important meanings for community members, meanings that were not strongly or explicitly associated with a particular ideological concept. When such associations were made with more general ideological concepts (political or religious) they appeared vague and ambiguous.

In the rural context the considerable impact of living close to nature² proved to be a vital element in the formation of lived practice. Community members described a unity and bonding that was brought about by sharing similar experiences of the land and nature. This unusual concept is outlined in detail below, where the bonding effect is termed 'organic embodied solidarity'. Yet

² I will explain below, in Chapter 1.2 Key Concepts, how I am defining nature.

not all lived practice and cultural concerns supported community cohesion. Strategic tendencies (spiky-fluffy) which are traced back to previous social movements are found to fracture the community at this level. Importantly these differences in strategy were related by many community members to differences between spiritual traditions. Indeed it was during the exploration of spirituality and work practices that these tensions were uncovered and traced back to previous social movements. The study goes on to suggest that differences in strategic tendency form a significant discourse, associated with religion and spirituality, within the rural environmental communities. Furthermore it is proposed that the tensions caused by strategic tendencies have led to the formulation of differently orientated support networks at the wider movement level of environmental communities.

1.1 Methods

The study uses qualitative methods to comprehend the complex social relationships within environmental communities. The primary source used for the analysis below is thirty in-depth, semi structured interviews within three environmental communities (Raven Hill, Yosemite and Brecon).³ The shortest of these interviews was thirty minutes and the longest two and a half hours. All community members were invited to be interviewed and nearly all accepted the invitation, the exceptions being one member from Brecon and two members from Yosemite who were away on holiday at the time of the interviews. A degree of triangulation was ensured by an additional five interviews with members of other environmental communities in the UK. Whilst conducting these interviews I participated in community life as a temporary worker for five weeks in total, making field notes which I specifically refer to in the analysis below. I considered this personal involvement was vital as, by participating in communal tasks and just living in the same environment, I built up a store of similar experiences to the community members (Bryman, 2008, p. 466; McCutcheon, 1999).

I began this study with a very vague thesis, one that maintained that religion, despite some claims to the contrary, was present within environmental communities and contributed in some manner to the overall functioning of

³ Raven Hill, Yosemite, Brecon and Green Terrace are pseudonyms adopted here to secure the anonymity of community members, see Chapter 5.1.

the social group. Through my adopted research strategies I was able to uncover the existing social reality and lived practice within the communities. This inductive method allowed me to pick up on two strong community discourses that related to religion and spirituality (Chapters 7 & 8).

For some community members, religious beliefs were described as being very personal. Furthermore, as will become apparent below, noticeable tensions around religion existed within the communities studied. To protect community members who wished that their spiritual beliefs remain private and to encourage community members who may have been reticent due to the tensions I chose to adopt a degree of anonymity. The names of the interviewees and the organisational names for three communities that form the study have therefore been anonymised. Aside from the practical benefits for the study of adopting anonymity, it also ensured that a number of ethical concerns could be addressed. All those interviewed signed consent forms which assured them of anonymity and informed them of their entitlement to withdraw from the study at any time.

I purposely selected both urban and rural contexts for the study to compare the forms of religion and spirituality present. Initially I planned to only conduct two community studies, one rural and one urban (Raven Hill and Brecon). However, after conducting interviews at Raven Hill I became aware that some members in a rural context were seeking a more unified religious ideology. After a prolonged and difficult search I negotiated a further community to study, Yosemite, which appeared to be advancing towards an integration of both ecological and spiritual concepts. Upon completion of the interviews at Brecon I did consider the inclusion of another urban community to provide an urban/rural equilibrium. The urban context however proved to be more difficult to access and I discovered that a lot more tensions existed in relation to religion and spirituality. Consequently I had to accept that I could gain permission to study only one urban community (Brecon) rather than the preferred two. This turned out to be only the first of many stark differences between the two contexts. This imbalance was corrected to some degree by two in-depth triangulation interviews from Green Terrace, a community in an urban context.

In the interests of reflexivity I should reveal the personal journey that has led me to conduct this study. Back in 2001 I visited the Raven Hill environmental community in connection with my MA degree. My four week stay not only provided a sufficient context to complete my studies; it also proved to be a significant positive personal experience. Intense experiences of both small-

scale community and the organic environment were unlike anything I had encountered before. Hence over the past ten years I have been an intermittent visitor to the community, thus having the privilege of seeing it mature. Two features in particular at Raven Hill have always fascinated me from the very first visit: firstly the sheer diversity of political and religious ideologies present within a relatively small community and secondly, the manner in which the community members interacted with the organic environment. Consequently these features within all three communities receive particular attention below. During the same time frame I have lived alongside the Brecon community in the urban context. Occasionally I have joined in with community members at Brecon as they conducted direct action political protests. In less intense and local settings I have volunteered alongside community members in helping destitute asylum seekers receive social care and practical assistance.

As already stated above I have had intermittently experienced environmental communities in urban and rural contexts over the past ten years.⁴ In this respect I need to be reflexive and state that I have a degree of partisanship with such communities. Nevertheless, I do not consider this partisanship has restricted my ability to produce thorough and robust ethnographic observations (Grills, 1998, p. 77). The disadvantages of such partisanship for the research are certainly worth addressing. My primary concern relates to familiarity. When a researcher is comfortable and familiar within the research environment (as I considered myself to be) it is possible to overlook everyday actions and expressions, accepting them as normal and not worthy of further analysis. The advantages of partisanship are also worth outlining. Having a firm grasp of environmentalist terms, framings and concepts (political, biological, philosophical) from the inside has certainly helped in my understanding of communal life. Scott Grills has highlighted such factors questioning the feasibility of a non-partisan approach in highly political settings.

“Here lies the heart of the problem for more traditional field research in highly politicised settings. How does the researcher sustain and

⁴ This study relies solely upon the information gathered from the interviews and the periods of participant observation 20012/2013. However the themes I chose to concentrate upon and the follow up questions I directed towards interviewees was certainly informed by my previous experiences of environmental communities.

negotiate a non-partisan identity in partisan settings? If participants have constructed and maintained a world-view that is demarcated by moral absolutes and dichotomies, there may be little flexibility to allow for the more neutral status of sociologist and participant observer. There is little middle ground between them and us, right and wrong, and the chosen and the damned. In such a context, any claim of neutrality can become highly problematic.” (Grills, 1998, p. 78).

He also adds to this the difficulty often encountered by non-partisan researchers receiving overtures from movement recruiters (Grills, 1998, pp. 83,91). Adopting the partisan approach and my existing connections with Raven Hill certainly helped me gain access to the Yosemite environmental community. It is with all this in mind that I make no claims that this study is value-free declaring instead my intention to be, where possible, value-explicit (Letherby, 2003, p. 71).

1.2 Key Concepts and Terminology

Throughout this study I maintain a distinction between religion and spirituality, religious traditions and spiritual traditions. Given the ambiguity of these terms among academics and the general public it will be helpful for me to outline clearly what I am referring to when I use these terms. My interest in the distinction is twofold. Firstly many community members and EDA movement participants have employed the terms to differentiate their spiritual practices from what they term mainstream dogmatic religion (Harris, 2008, p. 21; Jamison, 2011, p. 111). Part of this study examines what community members understand these terms to mean and therefore contributes to on-going academic discussions (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). I acknowledge from the outset that the endeavour is not without its pitfalls as the defining features are not always precise. Secondly I am also interested in the functional aspects inherent in the differentiation. In Chapter 8 I will examine in detail how a particular spiritual tradition ‘Core Shamanism (Developing)’ is more like a structured and organised religion than the predominant forms of spirituality in rural environmental communities. To achieve this I need to identify particular functional traits associated within the terms religion and spirituality. This development of a spiritual tradition towards a more organised and structured religious form is interesting and contentious as it runs counter to the critical approach generally taken towards organised forms of religion within environmental communities.

For the purposes of this study I will be following Brian Zinnbauer's definition of spirituality (1997, p. 551)⁵, who helpfully reflects more generally on the term and explains how recent interpretations have narrowed the understanding of religiousness/religion. Historically, religiousness included both individual and institutional elements. However as the term spirituality has become more popular in describing the personal experience of religion, including 'personal transcendence, supraconsciousness, sensitivity and meaningfulness' (1997, p. 551), it has tended to limit the term 'religiousness' to its institutional and organisational features. Ursula King traces this development back to the onset of modernity, when spirituality developed into a highly private mode of religious expression (King, 1998; 2009, p. 99).

Consistent with this approach I will use the term spirituality to refer to how community members are describing their personal experiences in connection with the meta-empirical realm.⁶ This may include an on-going relationship with a deity or higher power or alternatively they may declare that such experiences defy rational thought and explanation altogether. Importantly, in the case of some forms of contemporary paganism, meta-empirical understandings of the spiritual experience are left tenuous or vague, placing an emphasis on rituals to express meaning (Harris, 2008, p. 22).

For this research context I will need to distinguish and highlight when spirituality is being interpreted in a dualistic way. Some understandings of the spiritual hold that there is a divide between the physical and spiritual

⁵ Similar understanding also adopted by Ursula King (2009) and Bron Taylor (2001) and referred to by Peter Hill (2000).

⁶ I will on occasions refer to the empirical/meta-empirical distinction. In doing so I am indicating on the one hand a reliance on knowledge gained from empirical observation and experimentation alone and on the other knowledge, assertions, claims and beliefs that are said to be beyond empirical observation or investigation by scientific methods. I accept that the spiritual experience of a particular human may in fact be measured empirically, what I am defining here as meta-empirical are the claims and beliefs associated with those experiences, my definition is therefore similar to Graham Harvey (2000, p. 81). The distinction is further complicated in relation to some forms of contemporary paganism and Eco-Paganism as spiritual experiences of nature are not necessarily associated with any particular belief or other worldly realm. This complexity is explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

realms and that the physical is somehow corrupt or lesser and the spiritual pure or superior (King, 1998, p. 99). This stance is particularly contentious in environmental movements as such frames of thought are often considered responsible for exploitation and disregard of the natural world (White, 1967). Nevertheless such understandings have not dissuaded EDA movement activists, who generally resist such a dualism, from using the term spiritual, as Bron Taylor states here they are more likely to associate such duality with organised religion.

“Spirituality is often thought to be about personal growth and gaining a proper understanding of one’s place in the cosmos, and to be intertwined with environmentalist concern and action. This contrasts markedly with the world’s predominant religions, which are generally concerned with transcending this world or obtaining divine rescue from it.” (Taylor, 2010, p. 3).

Animism, Pantheism, Gaianism and Contemporary Paganism deserve special mention here, sometimes broadly termed Nature Religions (2010, p. 5). Nature Religions; characterised by their reverence of, and connection with, nature, are often identified as spiritual not religious, especially by their adherents (Hay, 2002, p. 94). My insistence in maintaining the definition of spirituality may at times seem unnecessary but I do think it is vital for analysing the spiritual experiences as expressed by community members which, on occasions, may not be ascribed to a religious belief system. Furthermore, community members themselves had their own views on what the differences might be; these seemingly important to acknowledge (see Chapter 6.3).⁷

I will use the term religion or religious tradition to describe a coherent set of beliefs about life and the universe involving a higher power or divine being. Importantly such beliefs unite people, displaying features such as institutional social organisation, recognised rituals which are faithfully adhered to and regular communal gatherings where beliefs are reinforced. The distinctions outlined here will be particularly relevant to Chapter 8 where I detail the development of a spiritual tradition (core shamanism) towards a religious tradition that acknowledges a higher power.

⁷ In the interests of clear referencing I will be referring not only to the Chapter but also to the particular section or sub-section within that chapter, in this case Chapter 6 section 3.

In relation to community bonding I will be using the terms ideology, ideologies and ideological component, within my analysis. Since these terms are foundational to the study I will elaborate further on the terms here. I use the term 'Ideology' when referring to a body of ideas or set of beliefs that have been consciously adopted by a group or society. The emphasis rests upon ideas agreed between individuals. Ideologies are therefore systems of thought which are usually applied to the ordering of society and physical matter (Cormack, 1992).

Importantly within my definition it is possible for an ideology not to be applied in a material or economic way, remaining unfulfilled, disembodied or possessing relative autonomy from the material realm (Marshall, 1998, p. 298). It is also possible to infer from the ordering of a particular society a given ideology, that is revealing an implicit ideology (Johnson, 1995, p. 137). Values and meaning are in these cases derived from lived practice, implicit forms without explicit reference to the realm of ideas. The many examples of consensus decision-making within the communities that form this study would be one example of this process. The importance placed on the individual member in these processes could be said to reflect an anarchist ideology as frequently described in political theory. Tellingly, however, this association was not verbalised. Whilst recognising the validity of this approach I will not be referring to these patterns of living as an 'implicit ideology' since it would not usually be comprehended as such by the social actors of a particular community or society. I will therefore refer to such situations as being orientated towards cultural, relational and normative concerns (see Chapter 9.4.2.2). In many instances, however, both ideology and lived practice are present and in a dynamic relationship with one another, and it is in this respect that I will occasionally refer to the term 'ideological component' to emphasise the realm of ideas. This is an important distinction to make when attempting to understand the ideologically heterogeneous communities which are studied below.

The term ideology is generally associated with politics and social movements (Johnson, 1995, p. 137). Furthermore its very use can imply a strong Marxist political influence by the author (Marshall, 1998, p. 297). However I make it clear that I intend to use the term in a purely functional way avoiding these particular assumptions. I will therefore not be restricting the definition to ideas that are understood to hide the reality of economic relations (ibid), but will instead include broader concepts such as ideas that challenge dominant social and economic structures. Many of these can be

considered utopian or visionary, these being concepts regularly referred to by commentators of alternative communities (Geus, 1999; Hardy, 1979).

My functional interpretation of the term also allows me to apply it to religion. Hence I will throughout the study talk of religious ideology, the ideological component being the religious concepts and theology. I stress here the distinction made above between religion, a coherent set of beliefs that unites people, and spirituality with its emphasis on personal experiences and beliefs. I will not therefore be referring to 'spiritual ideologies' as the essential group element is not usually exhibited. I am not asserting here that the idea, spiritual notion, or consciousness contained in any given spiritual practice is not important; however, since the practice is potentially singular (selected by an individual person), I will refer to these spiritual/religious notions as the 'official component' or 'authoritative source' (see Chapter 8.4.1). I will also talk of 'environmental ideologies' as I have chosen not to squeeze environmental thinking into the political framework. My decision to do this is based on the fact that the main expressions of environmental concern I am analysing here centre upon the human-organic environment, relationship in contrast to political ideologies which mainly centre upon purely, human – human concerns (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1967).

This central concern surrounding environment requires me to take account of the lived experience in predominantly organic environments. The body experiences of community members in relation to nature are therefore foundational in understanding religion and spirituality since many of the forms present consider nature to be divine or of ultimate significance. I will regularly refer to 'embodied' aspects or experiences to emphasise these concerns. I use the terms 'embodiment' and 'embodied' to describe the sensory experiences of a person's body and their emotional responses. Furthermore such sensory experiences are translated into forms of knowing and patterns of physical action (see habitus below), these relating primarily to the body experience (Mellor & Shilling, 2010b, p. 217). Invariably given my context these body experiences are related to nature, the organic environment. This can be contrasted with purely cognitive forms of knowing and understanding such as 'disembodied' beliefs commonly associated with ideologies (Cormack, 1992; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 70). The theme of embodiment within sociology and religious studies has become increasingly popular although it is often not explicitly referred to as embodiment (Turner, 2010, p. 117). While the theme is frequently linked by academics to the Durkheimian ontology, with its emphasis on subjective, affective and

grounded aspects (Turner, 2010, p. 57) it can also be related to Weber's analysis of the 'body as a vital mediator in the relationship between religion and modernity'. Both approaches note the consequential importance of habit, the repeated body action; however the focus of attention for Durkheim is on the collective group and for Weber it is the individual. (Mellor & Shilling, 2010b, p. 202).

I will discuss further in Chapter 9.4.1 the theme of embodiment in relation to the organic environment. Here though, I need to expand on the concept of 'habitus' mentioned above as it relates closely to the theme of embodiment and the cultural practices of community members.

The work of Marcel Mauss on 'body techniques' (*Les techniques du corps*) is often cited as the inspiration for the concept (2002). It was further developed in the 1930s by Norbert Elias (1996) and in the 1970s by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1990) broadened Mauss's notion of the habitus to include the inculcation of unconscious dispositions and practical orientations, but narrowed the latter's interest in body techniques across a range of religious, military and educational contexts, and Elias's interest in habitus in relation to large scale civilizational processes, to focus specifically on the key role of the habitus in the pre-reflexive maintenance of class structures. For each of these writers then, the notion of the habitus is utilized in somewhat different ways though they share a common focus on its key role in the generation and maintenance of the non-discursive aspects of a given culture. It involves a set of dispositions (practical or enacted beliefs) that are formed by the regular movement of the body (Harris, 2008, p. 45); the embodied aspects of social structures are therefore accentuated.

"Practical belief is not a 'state of mind', still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines ('beliefs'), but rather a state of the body. Doxa is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for granted of the world that flows from practical sense" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68).

Bourdieu helpfully discusses at length the interrelating elements that contribute to the habitus: physical space, social space, language and time. The first of these is directly relevant to this study especially in the rural context. The impact of a rural environment and the forms of habitus that are retained or reformed constitutes an important element within Chapter 9.4.1, where the near, present and local are emphasised (Mellor, 2004, p. 145). The question of the durability or stability of the habitus, and the limitations of

Bourdieu's specific emphasis on its essentially conservative function in relation to class, is worth reflecting upon, however, since a large part of this study relates to social movements with their open agenda for social change I will give specific consideration to how the habitus changes over time. Mellor and Shilling have commented upon the alteration and change of the habitus.

“While it is appropriate to associate the habitus with stability rather than change, it is also important to supplement this with an awareness of the possibilities for change inherent within patterns of human interaction. The approaches of Mauss and Bourdieu, for example, examine how the habitus is inscribed by cultural traditions, but are less concerned with how social interaction reacts back on and leads to the development of new orientations to the body” (Mellor & Shilling, 1997, p. 21).

Throughout the study I will be identifying the characteristics of environmental movements that were influential in the formation of environmental communities. Part of those characteristics relate to the distinct culture of the EDA movement, which eventually formed a new (or reformed) habitus. I will suggest in the coming chapters that this habitus has transferred into environmental communities and is in the process of being further developed or reformed.

The notion of Bourdieu's habitus has also been utilised by David Horton in his analysis of environmentalist lifestyles. He has identified behaviour which contributes to a distinct activist culture.

“green culture continuously structures, and is simultaneously (re)structured by, the practices of those who conform to its codes” (Horton, 2002, p. 74).

In examining the somatic dispositions which form part of this particular green culture he has developed the idea of 'green scripts' (2003, p. 75). These green scripts then, are 'more settled narratives to which activists must conform' (2003, p. 68). Horton's analysis here will be valuable as I examine in the coming chapters the cultural, relational and day-to-day practices of movement participants and community members.

The final term I want to define is 'nature'. Although the term nature can be used to describe a quality, an innate character of the physical universe, I will in the interests of clarity avoid such definitions (Williams, 1983, p. 219). I will instead employ the term when referring to the organic environment, animals and naturally occurring inert matter such as rocks and minerals. I have

chosen to exclude humans from my definition. I am aware that this is somewhat contentious since it implies a separation is possible between humans and the organic environment (Harris, 2008, p. 13). I am not making an ontological statement here but mirroring the way community members used the term. In their descriptions of nature they did not refer to human subjects. They appeared to accept to some degree that humans could become separated from the organic environment. This was most evident in the way they talked of 'nature connection' the task of re-connecting other humans with nature. This seemed to imply, even if only by degree, that some humans could be connected to nature and others not so. I also employ the term to distinguish between objects within the physical world, distinguishing between man-made objects and the organic environment, nature. Again I am not making an ontological statement here; I am well aware that human activity radically influences the organic environment and that many landscapes can be considered to be socially constructed (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Wall, 1999, p. 149). However such a distinction does in fact reflect the way community members expressed themselves in relation to the theme of nature and man-made objects. This was particularly evident when exploring the differences between urban and rural contexts and will likewise be helpful when I refer to the same or similar contrasts. I will now briefly explain the content contained within each of the chapters.

1.3 Chapter Synopsis

I begin in Chapter 2 by reviewing sociological theories relating to social movements in general. I specifically focus on New Social Movement (NSM) theories as many commentators associate environmental movements with these theories. I emphasise in particular their tendency to be ideologically heterogeneous and wide-ranging in their concerns, interested in the transformation of the cultural realm. I then comment on environmental movements generally, these being influential in the development of environmental communities. I start by charting the rise of environmental concern during the early 1960s, highlighting the important philosophical strands that developed, human ecology, deep ecology and the ecocentric approach. Towards the end of the chapter I turn my attention to spirituality and the deep ecology/ecocentric approaches describing some of the complexities of how religion and spirituality interrelate with the environmental theme.

In Chapter 3 I concentrate on community. I begin by briefly charting the history of alternative communities and communes in the 19th and 20th centuries. I establish the common characteristics that have continued into the 21st century and influenced environmental communities. I then expound directly the characteristics of environmental communities, analysing in detail relevant academic literature. One distinct type of environmental community is identified, the 'low-impact' development community, and I elaborate upon its distinct features. Next I examine sociological theories relating to communal ventures generally identifying useful categorisations and distinctions. Finally, I consider the many typologies that have been formed to comprehend the disparate communal ventures that have been established over the centuries. I assess these typologies, highlighting their limitations in relation to environmental communities, and propose a new fourfold typology.

In Chapter 4 I analyse in detail religion within the Environmental Direct Action movement. The distinct characteristics of contemporary paganism, alternative spiritualities, Eco-Paganism and Shamanism are considered. My focus on the EDA movement was directed by the predominance of community members who stated they had participated in this movement. Since previous habits change slowly I also examine the wider inherent cultural aspects of the movement along with the dominant political ideology, 'social ecology'. Some space is given over to the complex territory between spiritual and political concepts (Eco-Paganism, eco-primitivism, shamanism, anarchism social ecology) and I explore the possibility that the religious/non-religious or spiritual/non spiritual distinction was in some respects intentionally transcended by movement participants.

Chapters 5 and 6 introduce the three communities that form the heart of the study. Two are set in a rural context and one in an urban context. I endeavour to communicate the lifeworld of each community including seemingly mundane aspects such as work arrangements, food, meetings, parties, family arrangements and architecture. Having considered these wider cultural aspects I then analyse the forms of religion and spirituality present and the attitudes of all community members towards religion and spirituality. The place of religion and spirituality is mapped within the communities using the concept of four realms; Inner, Personal, Social and Public. To ensure that a broad range of ideological concepts are considered I include attitudes to science and technology and specific political ideologies. To finish I suggest that, although extremely diverse religious and spiritual traditions are practiced, three broad groupings can be identified, Eco-

Paganism, Eclectic and Core Shamanism (developing). The presence and place of these traditions is compared in urban and rural contexts and found to be starkly different.

Having elaborated on community life in detail I then pick up on, in Chapters 7 and 8, two particularly strong community discourses surrounding religion and spirituality. The first discourse (Chapter 7) in fact related to differences in strategic philosophy, emanating from a previous movement discourse which was present in the EDA movement (UK). The common terms used within the movement for this strategic difference were 'Spiky and Fluffy'. I explain how these strategic differences are indicative of a broader tendency, beyond just violent or non-violent tactics, which can be detected within the earlier 1960s countercultural movements both in the UK and USA. Having completed this detailed analysis I suggest that the discourse reveals longstanding and enduring differences that divide, to some degree, both social movement participants and community members. I also propose that such differences align with urban and rural contexts and can be identified as developing into different networks within the overall phenomenon of environmental communities.

In Chapter 8 I concentrate on the second community discourse which centres directly upon religion and spirituality within the rural context. I briefly describe the Art of Mentoring movement and its influence upon some community members. The development of a shamanic spiritual tradition, core shamanism (developing), is charted. I then concentrate on the functional aspects of this developing spiritual tradition demonstrating, with the aid of models, how it is distinctly different from the other recognisable traditions of Eco-Paganism and Eclectic spirituality.

In Chapter 9, I address the functional aspects of community life building upon the analysis of previous chapters. I examine in a more general way what is bonding community members together and consider the place of religion and spirituality. Political and religious ideological concepts are found to be heterogeneous, indicating a dominant pluralistic ethic. Other bonding qualities are however identified in a common culture and distinct habitus which are arranged around the environmental theme (green scripts). In the rural context I define a particular type of community bonding based on the organic environment, 'organic embodied solidarity'. I then locate these findings within past sociological studies relating to communal movements and NSM theories. I outline some of the tensions inherent in employing social movement structures to organise small-scale communities. The

homogenising forces of the small group, identified in earlier sociological studies, are found to be particularly relevant. Next I posit that the communities within the study have been effected by similar forces which explains the move towards a more set religious-like structure in the rural context (Chapter 8) and the adoption of mechanisms to counteract the homogenising forces in the urban context, namely the principles of 'secular dissent'.

In Chapter 10, my final conclusions, I summarise my findings in relation to the types of religion and spirituality present and evaluate the functional role that those traditions have within the communities studied. I then offer a narrative account of how environmental communities came into existence and have developed over the past 30 years. To conclude, I speculate on future scenarios for small-scale environmental communities with reference to past communal movements of the 20th century and current sociological studies.

With these basic preliminaries covered I now begin my content chapters, beginning with social movement theories that relate to EDA movements of the 1990s and environmental communities.

~ Chapter 2 ~ Social Movements, Environmental Movements

2.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I will be reviewing sociological theories relating to social movements in general. New social movement theories in particular are discussed as I maintain their features align closely with the EDA movement within the UK and environmental communities. In the analytical chapters 5 to 9 I will frequently refer to the characteristics of NSM theories and how they relate to pluralism or a pluralistic ethic present within environmental communities.

The other major area covered in this chapter relates to environmental movements more generally. I begin by outlining a brief history of environmental movements to locate the different strands of environmental concern, human ecology, deep ecology and the ecocentric approach. I also address the organisational structures of environmental movements as I consider that they correlate to some degree with the structures adopted within environmental communities. Toward the end of the chapter I concentrate on how ecocentric and deep ecology perspectives are frequently associated with spirituality and metaphysical beliefs. I will not address in this Chapter what I consider to be the most influential movement in the development of environmental communities - the Environmental Direct Action movement - this will receive separate attention and analysis in Chapter 4.

2.2 New Social Movement Theories

A number of social theories have been developed to comprehend and make sense of social movements in general, for example collective behaviour theory (Pakulski, 1991, p. 4), resource mobilisation theory (Laraña, Johnston, & Gusfield, 1994, p. 92) and political process theory (Crossley, 2002, p. 114). However New Social Movement (NSM) theories in particular have been employed to analyse environmental movements. Unlike resource mobilisation and political process theories which originated from the USA, NSM theories were developed in Western Europe by sociologists analysing social movements in Europe from 1968 onwards. New social movement theorists such as Alain Touraine, Ernesto Laclau, Alberto Melucci and Jürgen Habermas responded critically to Marxist-oriented social theories that

concentrated excessively on cleavages around class and social stratification. The inadequacy of the Marxist approach in explaining the rise of women's movements, environmental movements, animal rights movements, gay rights movements and various peace movements, among others, led theorists to search for new explanations. The main thrust of the theories revolve around understanding the greater changes that have taken place in Western society, namely the decline of heavy industry (post-industrial society) and the challenges to excessive materialism (post materialist society) (Crossley, 2002, p. 151; Pakulski, 1991, p. 19).

New social movement theorists argue that the motives that drive social movement actors cannot always be measured, therefore their theories tend to rely more on qualitative methods of research in contrast to the empiricist based studies of resource mobilisation and political process (Crossley, 2002, p. 149). In understanding what motivates social actors to become involved in these new movements, theorists have explored notions of culture, identity and ways of life. They have highlighted the importance placed upon social life and the intentional development of the cultural realm (Jones & O'Donnell, 2010, p. 18). This can be contrast with movements of earlier periods which appeared to place a greater emphasis on the ideological aspects of the movement.

Some NSM theorists claim to have identified a rupture between the public and private spheres of life in Western culture. As Charles Tilly has noted, a defining characteristic of NSMs are their *scope*. He claims that NSM participants are not interested in political power but intent on 'recasting the very framework of life' (Tilly, 2004, p. 71). It is argued that state intrusions into the private sphere as well as increasing commodification of social relationships have induced responses resulting in NSMs. Jürgen Habermas terms this the 'colonisation of the lifeworld' (Goldblatt, 1996, p. 126) where the role of the state is ever increasing and technological advances make it increasingly easier to control citizens (Crossley, 2002, p. 159). The NSMs, reacting to these intrusions, have generally focussed on defending the individual person and their life choices. Hence the personal becomes the new political battleground. Furthermore, this focus usually generates an interest in a specific cultural field or local context which has the inevitable effect of a lessening the focus on wider political structures (Crossley, 2002, p. 152). As will become clear later in this study, the emphasis here on the individual person and local context is particularly relevant to environmental communities in that as movement participants join environmental

communities (usually from environmental social movements) their political concerns become more personal and local (see Chapters 5 & 6).

This emphasis then towards cultural concerns and the greater importance placed on an individual's lived experience has allowed another distinct feature of NSMs to develop, namely a tendency for a number of ideologies to co-exist within the same movement. NSMs then frequently 'exhibit a pluralism of ideas and values' (Doyle & McEachern, 2001, p. 84; Laraña et al., 1994, p. 7; Melucci, Keane, & Mier, 1989, pp. 58-62). Hence rather than assuming any particular social movement possesses a single coherent and set ideology it is perhaps better to view the ideological component as disparate and eclectic, shaped by internal movement discourse (Pakulski, 1991, p. 169; Scott, 1990, pp. 100, 104). In the chapters below I will refer repeatedly to these prominent features observed within NSMs.

2.2.1 Collective Identity and Cognitive Practice

I will now comment upon the theories of collective identity and cognitive practice since I consider them particularly useful to this study. Alberto Melucci is credited with bringing the concept of collective identity to the fore in research of New Social Movements (Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 394). Building upon the work of Alain Touraine (1981, 1985) and Alessandro Pizzorno (Crouch & Pizzorno, 1978) he has developed a systematic and comprehensive theory of *collective identity* within social movements (Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 394; Melucci, 1995). For Melucci collective identity within social movements is formulated by actors 'who are capable of defining themselves and the field of their action'. The result of this process, the creation of an action system, he calls collective identity (1989, p. 34). Collective identity involves the construction of a 'we' by developing common cognitive frameworks and the development of relationships in which actors recognise they are part of a collective group (1989, p. 35). His approach resolutely focusses upon the processes that form collective identity, which he asserts are continual.

"In order to act collectively at any given time, it is necessary to define a conception of a 'we'; however, this definition is not likely to be set once and for all, and it has to be agreed upon over and over again in a continual negotiation process" (Melucci, 1996, p. 189).

What is worth highlighting here is that the processes of conflict, contestation and negotiation are not only taking place between the NSM and the dominant socio-political authority but are also taking place internally within

the movement, and indeed within the smaller grouping (affinity group); who are constructing collective identity (Doherty, 2002, p. 67). This recurring feature within NSMs should be recalled when I discuss community bonding in urban contexts - referring to Brumann's concept of secular dissent (2001) see Chapter 9.5 - and community disputes in rural contexts surrounding religion and spirituality, see chapters 7 and 8.

Melucci is also concerned about the location and timing of this ongoing process, this focus has led him to distinguishing between the visible and latent aspects of social movements (1989, p. 71). The visible, observable, aspects of social movements (protests and formal organisation) have been traditional terrain for those studying social movements more generally. However NSM theorists commonly highlight the importance of the latent aspects of the movement, the day-to-day activities that form specific culture codes within the movement (1989, p. 60). It is in relation to these latent elements of NSMs that Melucci has identified the existence of 'submerged networks' which he considers are key in movement formation (1995, p. 57). These networks are less visible and difficult to define as they have minimal formal structure and are in a state of constant flux (Bartholomew & Mayer, 1992, p. 146). Even so they are considered vital to the effectiveness of NSMs. Melucci also claims these submerged networks act as 'cultural laboratories' where theory can be tested in every-day life; where new meanings can be invented and tested out (1988; 1989, p. 222). These factors lead him to conclude that 'the form of the movement is thus itself a message' (1989, p. 60). These processes are potent in challenging the dominant cultural codes which the movement is seeking to change (1996, p. 169). Moreover they eventually produce and reproduce new cultural codes (Bartholomew & Mayer, 1992, p. 146; Melucci et al., 1989). I will develop this theme later to include cultural codes that are formed and reformed within environmental movements; discussing the work of David Horton and his concept of green cultural codes (Horton, 2003) see chapter 4.2.

The recognition and emphasis of the latent aspects in NSMs underscores key differences between the social movement level and smaller group level (local affinity group) that contribute to collective identity. The stress placed upon the relational and affective aspects in the formation of collective identity has led some academics, such as Clare Saunders, to argue that the concept as defined by Melucci and others can only take place at the group level.

“There is clearly a mismatch between definitions of collective identity, which either specifically emphasize the group level, or evoke processes that could only possibly take place at the group level, and the grand claims of its role in binding movements. The problem is that scholars unwittingly conflate the movement and group level. Collective identity (in the singular) at the movement level does not exist, but collective identities do. Therefore it would be more accurate, when referring to the concept at movement level, to talk of either collective identities, in the plural, or, if we instead take the lowest common denominator of shared interests, the term ‘shared concern’ becomes more appropriate” (Saunders, 2008, p. 232).

Saunders is correct here in identifying a theoretical muddle or conflation between collective identity constructed at the group level and at the movement level. I would concur that some processes in the formation of collective identity, such as emotional face-to-face interactions and interactions involving the body, appear to be only possible at the group level. I would also add that the number of movement participants that an individual person can relate to in this way is limited, hence the necessity for a smaller grouping. However I consider associating the term (collective identity) exclusively to the group level would be problematic. The collective identity of the group is formed within the context of the movement, part of its identity is therefore bound up at the movement level. The collective identity relating to the movement level would appear to comprise of more than just ‘shared concerns’. I would prefer to retain both levels within the term accepting that they are overlapping and partly combined. Still I would argue that the formation of collective identity is heavily weighted towards the latent, cultural aspects as lived out day-to-day in the smaller grouping; evidenced by the discourse above. The analysis here, of different levels operating within collective identity, will be particularly relevant to my exploration of the activist’s journey from the EDA movement to environmental communities. It should be noted that the small scale commune form of living correlates with many of the latent aspects of the EDA movement, especially the day-to-day activities on in the protest camps. Additionally the notion of collective identity is commonly associated with political theories, but is it possible for collective identities to be formed by blending various political and religious ideas and traditions? Throughout the study I will therefore endeavour to incorporate the major political and religious notions present within the environmental communities to ascertain if this is happening.

I will now comment upon Eyerman and Jamison's analytical notion of cognitive practice which also seeks to illuminate and comprehend the phenomenon of collective identity. In their book, 'Social movements : a cognitive approach' (1991), they acknowledge the influence of Jürgen Habermas's 'knowledge constituting interests' (1972) in formation of their model. In a similar manner to Melucci, they centre their attentions on the continual dynamic processes evident within social movements. This approach stresses the cognitive aspects such as knowledge production within the movement.

"In other words, social movements are the result of an interactional process which centers around the articulation of a collective identity and which occurs within the boundaries of a particular society. Our approach thus focuses upon the process of articulating a movement identity (cognitive praxis), on the actors taking part in this process (movement intellectuals), and on the contexts of articulation (political cultures and institutions)." (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 4).

For Eyerman and Jamison knowledge production within social movements is deeply connected to the processes that take place within the movement; the constant interactions between movement participants at the cognitive level. They examine in detail the collaboration of movement intellectuals as they construct new forms of knowledge that give meaning to the movement. Knowledge production is itself considered a 'form of social action' (1991, p. 5). The term 'social laboratories' is used by them to further explain this innovative process (1991, p. 93). This appears similar to Melucci's concept of 'cultural laboratories' as discussed above but not specifically connected to the smaller grouping within the movement.

In emphasising the 'creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action' they have developed three basic dimensions of cognitive practice (knowledge interests) that form the very cornerstones of movement identity (1991, p. 3):- a movement's 'cosmological knowledge interest' which refers to its worldview and utopian mission - a movement's 'technological knowledge interest' which refers to concerns and issues in relation to technology as well as specific techniques of protest - and the 'organizational knowledge interest' referring to the 'way in which movements get their message across, and the organizational forms within which their cognitive praxis unfolds' (1991, pp. 68-69). The outlining of these dimensions indicates that Eyerman and Jamison are not merely concerned with understanding how cognitive aspects are formed but also how they are practiced; how they

influences the socio-political realm; how they inspire movement action (1991, p. 58).

The notion of cognitive practice applies to social movements in general. Yet Eyerman and Jamison do make specific reference to the environmental movement during the 1970s and 1980s in Chapter 3. Here it is recognised that the environmental movement has a particular bias towards the embodiment of their cognitive identity - Ideas related to systems ecology were embodied by the movement - a feature also identified by Boström (2004).

“The environmental movement embodied the concepts of ecology by contextualizing and politicizing them, but also by internalizing them.” (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 72).

The environmental movement then stresses the praxis of movement identity in contrast to the possibility of ‘disembodied forms of consciousness’ (1991, p. 70). The particular reasons why this might be will be explored in the following section and Chapter 4.8 (social ecology).

2.3 Environmental Movements

Having outlined the key attributes of NSM theories I will now discuss the environmental movements which have been influential in the development of environmental communities. I will begin by charting the rise of environmental concern during the early 1960s, highlighting the important philosophical developments that took place.

2.3.1 Rachael Carson

The publication in 1962 of ‘Silent Spring’ by Rachael Carson is regularly referred to as heralding the beginning of the modern environmental movement (Bramwell, 1994; Carson, 1982; Glover, 2006; Hay, 2002; Radcliffe & Campling, 2000; Robbins, 2004; Veldman, 1994). Silent Spring’s central focus was the ecological destructiveness of synthetic pesticides which were becoming common place in the greening revolution which was sweeping across the USA (Robbins, 2004, p. 66). DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro-ethane) in particular was scrutinised and its detrimental effects catalogued. Carson’s book challenged the indiscriminate crop dusting with insecticides which were destroying wildlife and progressively poisoning the human habitat. This challenge was founded on scientific evidence (Carson

being an eminent biologist) revealing a blind spot by the scientists who were applying these new technologies. Carson's observations and challenge to this application of science and technology were in many respects not unique; as early as the 1920s the RSPB had observed the destructive effects of oil pollution on coastal birds (Sutton, 2000, p. 104). Also, the founding of the 'National Society for Clean Air', in 1929, heralded an awareness of the incidental damaging effects of the industrial world (Veldman, 1994, p. 244). What was novel however in Carson's work was the suggestion that unintentional destruction of nature (human-made) could lead to the eventual collapse of the whole ecosystem. Eventually, after some resistance from interested parties, Carson's criticisms along with other anti-pesticide campaigners, notably Murray Bookchin 'Our Synthetic Environment' (1962), led to more critical questioning of the application of science and technology. Public trust in science and technology had been seriously eroded. These apocalyptic, long-term concerns about the fate of humankind eventually fed into the wider social movements during the 1960s and early 1970s. Campaigns and protests began coalesce around concerns about the future use of atomic weapons and waste produced by nuclear power plants. Such campaigns frequently framed their arguments to include concerns about the environment (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 67,89; Veldman, 1994, p. 204).

It will be helpful here for me to outline some of the foundational aspects present within environmental concern. The concerns outlined above have been labelled by some as 'human welfare ecology' (Eckersley, 1992, p. 36). It is argued that the underlying concern of environmental action is in reality a concern for human safety, appeals and arguments to adopt new practices are often based on the potential damaging effects for humans. One way of describing this orientation would be anthropocentric (Hay, 2002, p. 33). Human interests remain the central concern and nature and the ecosystem are important in so much as they support human life, hence only forming only one element of what is important to humans along with other aspects such as education and defence (Lomborg, 2001, p. 30). However, questions surrounding the use of science and technology eventually led others to question the scale of industrial growth and its destructive impact on the organic environment.

2.3.2 Challenges to Economic and Industrial Growth

In the early 1970s a number of publications and debates began to focus on the social and economic aspect of modern society and how it affected the

environment (Doherty & Geus, 1996, p. 171). A report by the Massachusetts institute of technology published in 1972, 'The Limits to Growth', detailed the predictions of a scientifically based computer model of the world. Their findings were somewhat alarming, estimating eventual economic collapse and crisis if the world developed on the then current trajectory. The authors of the report advocated a 25% reduction in human population levels followed by 0% economic growth (Eckersley, 1992, p. 13; Pepper, Perkins, & Yaings, 1984, p. 23). The report was criticised for its gloomy predictions, with environmentalists fearing it would sap the will of developed countries to deal with the environmental crisis (Pepper et al., 1984, p. 24). 1972 also saw the publication of 'Blueprint for Survival' written by the editor of the Ecologist magazine (Goldsmith, 1972). This report also predicted disastrous consequences if issues affecting the environment were not addressed. Their suggested 'Blueprint' proposed large scale social and economic changes, calling on nation states to adopt a multi-faceted approach. The main recommendations included decentralisation in favour of small regional communities, small-scale use of technology and an emphasis on personal happiness, fulfilment and control over society (Pepper et al., 1984, p. 25). In many ways the Blueprint's approach was similar to earlier impulses of the romantic movement in that it challenged the dominant worldview which was advancing apace towards ever increasing global industrialisation (Goldsmith, 1972, p. 18).

E.F. Schumacher's book 'Small is Beautiful' was published in 1973. In contrast to the two previous publications Schumacher's approach was more abstract, distilling the present day value systems and its philosophical foundations. He suggested a very different economic system which he termed 'Buddhist Economics' (Schumacher, 1993, p. 38). This amounted to a system that had at its heart not a goal of capital formation or pursuit of profit but the fulfilment and happiness of people (Pepper et al., 1984, p. 26).

In the brief outlining of these three examples a more challenging tone towards the post-World War II growth consensus can be detected (Eckersley, 1992, p. 8), their criticisms of the dominant Western industrial capitalist system were not calling for moderate reform or reorganisation, but total replacement. Despite the radical nature of these new challenges their approach still remained anthropocentric. However, the recognition that the levels of the human population would have to be addressed coupled with the necessity to replace the dominant social and economic paradigm eventually led to new philosophical understandings which I will discuss in detail below.

Before I do I need to comment on another important feature around this period, namely mass participation.

2.3.3 Organisation, Mass Movement and Institutionalisation.

From the 1970s onwards membership in longstanding conservation societies (19th century onwards) and newly formed Environmental Movement Organisations (EMOs) began to increase in numbers. This considerable increase in membership and active involvement of people in Europe, North America and Australia indicated a new feature in environmental concern (Doherty, 2002, p. 121; Sutton, 2000, p. 121). However the proliferation of new EMOs that were founded during this period have been identified as very different to the more longstanding conservation focussed societies of the past. Conservation and preservation societies of the previous century typically operated as a single issue pressure group, influencing governments and wealthy elites. Although the new EMOs also utilised similar methods they also employed a more confrontational approach which can be linked with the wider social movements of the 1960s (Sutton, 2000, p. 121). Mass demonstration coupled with NVDA (Non Violent Direct Action) were used to influence government and the general public. The potential to exert political influence through the media also played a significant part in the development of these new tactics (Martell, 1994, p. 121). Differences have also been identified in relation to their geographical focus. The older conservation orientated societies tended, even when challenging problems such as air pollution, to localise the issue, pressing for local solutions. Modern industrial growth however had begun to create environmental problems on a national and global scale, issues such as acid rain, ozone depletion and climate change due to Co2 emissions (Martell, 1994, p. 121).

These global challenges had in turn spurred on advanced understandings in how the worlds ecosphere operated, these predominantly based on scientific research, for example James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis (1979).

Consequently EMOs appeals for preservation, of say a rainforest, were founded on not only on the grounds of losing a beautiful landscape but also on the damaging effects on a global scale.

Internal organisation of the new EMOs has also been identified as different. In the past conservation societies tended to invite members to support existing well defined goals. Decisions about tactics were made by founders or acting board members. The new EMOs sought to be more democratic

and egalitarian, involving the membership to a much greater extent (Martell, 1994, p. 113; Pakulski, 1991, p. 160; Radcliffe & Campling, 2000, p. 198). Conversely Brian Doherty has pointed out the level of involvement and influence of the average EMO member is considerably less than they portray. He cites Greenpeace in particular as hierarchical in structure, 'excluding millions of its supporters from the right to take protest using its name' (Doherty, 2002, p. 129). The newer EMOs have also become increasingly dependent on the input of professionals, be it in legal, IT, education or media. This can be contrasted with the early conservation societies which despite growth in numbers continued to be organised by a relatively small group of economically privileged volunteers. This process of increasing professionalisation has caused considerable controversy among many grass roots members who perceive it as divisive and damaging for moral. A frequent complaint was that the professionals hired had not been involved in the movement at any level before being employed (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 107).

The role of the EMOs staff (professional or non-professional) has also been questioned, in particular their engagement with government. As EMOs have increased in membership and in the public consciousness so too has their influence with local and national government. This has led in turn to increased engagement (formal and informal) between full time paid members of EMOs and civil servants or politicians. The agreements they arrive at on many occasions have been at odds with the grass roots members (Doherty, 2002, p. 134). Perhaps even more contentious are ties with businesses, it is not uncommon for EMOs to endorse manufacturers' products which may also be in conflict with its grass roots membership.⁸ This particular issue can become complex as such endorsements decrease the financial dependency of the EMO on membership subscriptions (Doherty, 2002, p. 137).

The discontent surrounding these organisational issues, coupled with the influence of earlier countercultural movements, eventually led to a more

⁸ For example 'Employees from Exxon and Chevron sit on the governing boards of conservation groups such as WWF in the USA. Forum for the Future, a UK environmental lobby group set up by Sara Parkin and Jonathon Porritt ...takes money from BP, ICI, Tesco and Blue Circle', all companies that have been the targets of attacks by other greens' (Doherty, 2002, p. 138).

prominent role for the smaller grouping at the grass roots level. As I discussed upon above the 1960s and 1970s countercultural movements sought to critique the whole of society, not just particular political components (Crossley, 2002, p. 152). The resulting interest in a specific cultural field or local context was a major influence in the formation of the communes movements in both the UK and USA (Rigby, 1974a; Veysey, 1978, p. 4). A similar shift towards the local context can be noted within the development of the larger EMOs (Doherty, 2002, p. 53). These smaller grouping were characterised by personal friendships and face to face contact. Moreover they began to organise at the local level adopting direct action tactics. These 'affinity-groups' as they came to be termed eventually led to the formation of the EDA movement (Doyle, 2005, pp. 100, 111). I will occasionally refer to the affinity-group structure within this study as it has been key in the formation environmental communities.

2.3.4 The Ecocentric Approach and Deep Ecology

During the same time period that the new EMOs were expanding a new radical foundation for environmental concern began to be uncovered or created. The philosophical works of the Norwegian Arne Naess around 1972 are usually regarded as the genesis of this new way of thinking, though some have also identified similar characteristics in Aldo Leopold's book 'A Sand County Almanac' published in 1949 (Leopold, 1949; Radcliffe & Campling, 2000, p. 73). In 1972 Naess, already an eminent scholar in ethics, delivered a lecture in Bucharest where he revealed that he had identified different philosophical foundations within environmental thinking. He observed that the larger part of environmental concern was focussed on issues around pollution and resource depletion and this was in the main only an issue because it effected the health and affluence of humans in developed countries (Naess, 1973, p. 95). However environmental concern could be founded on 'deeper' interests such as 'diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralisation, symbiosis, egalitarianism and classlessness' (Carter, 1999, p. 336). This deeper perspective he termed Deep Ecology, which was contrasted with the predominant form of environmental concern at that time, termed Shallow Ecology. It was not that environmentalists with a deep ecological perspective did not care about pollution and resource depletion but that they also had concerns founded at a deeper philosophical level (Fox, 1990, p. 103).

Arne Naess's work inspired what would eventually be called the 'Deep Ecology Movement' (DEM). However the development of this movement also relied heavily on other thinkers such as George Sessions, Bill Devall and Warwick Fox (Scarce, 1990, p. 38). The deep ecological perspective is founded on an ecocentric view, that the ecological world is central, and human kind is just another living species within it. This concept was originally termed 'Biocentric' but the prefix 'Bio' was considered too limiting as it only referred to living biology, excluding inanimate aspects of the ecological system (Fox, 1990, p. 117). In this wider sense whole landscapes are considered living entities (Naess, 1973, p. 99). Having identified this new foundational orientation deep ecologists were able to define 'shallow ecology' as anthropocentric. The challenging implications of the new ethical understanding, coupled with the fact it was for the most part being communicated in complex academic language, led Naess and Sessions to collaborate and produce in 1984 a simpler eight point list or platform for deep ecology (Porritt & Winner, 1988, p. 235).

The ecocentric approach and deep ecology perspective is particularly relevant to the rural environmental communities in this study as their organic environments provide ideal settings to implement their principles. As will become apparent below, community members frequently described their place within the organic environment as interdependent and of equal importance to other life forms. Discourses within environmental communities using the ecocentric approach have been noted by David Pepper (1991, p. 123).

The far-reaching consequences of the ecocentric approach is perhaps not realised until the practical implications are related to the political realm. Two concrete examples may help. Firstly human population: deep ecologist Gary Snyder has called for a 90% reduction in the human population to allow a restoration of pristine environments (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 2000, p. 37; Scarce, 1990). Such calls to limit the human population are of course not unique. Thomas Malthus back in the 18th century made similar appeals to limit the human population (Porritt & Winner, 1988, p. 237). However, Malthus made such appeals on an anthropocentric basis, to ensure the continuance of the human race, some would say the wealthy ruling class (Pepper et al., 1984, p. 130). Snyder's appeal is essentially ecocentric in that the central concern is the restoration and preservation of a pure ecological environment, which has been considered by some as 'verging on the misanthropic' (Bookchin, 1994, p. 4). Another challenging implication of the

ecocentric view relates to biological egalitarianism. Jonathan Porritt, environmental author and prominent member of the Ecology Party (now the Green Party) comments here upon the concept.

“Such an approach can, of course, be taken to extremes, and that tiny minority of Deep Ecologists who argue from a position of 'biological egalitarianism' (i.e. all organisms have equal rights, so that in principle a dandelion, let alone an AIDS virus, would be seen to have as much intrinsic value as a human being) are really a bit dotty.” (Porritt & Winner, 1988, p. 238).

Although Porritt is quick to dismiss what he considers an extreme of an otherwise 'good thing' (ibid), biotic equity is nonetheless, even if not widely supported (Carter, 1999, p. 349), a logical implication of an ecocentric approach (Dobson, 1995, p. 63; Radcliffe & Campling, 2000, p. 71). Robyn Eckersley has commented on this particular problem of 'biotic equity' by outlining what she considers is a misunderstanding of the ecocentric view.

“A third criticism is that ecocentrism is a passive and quietistic perspective that regards humans as no more valuable than, say, ants or the AIDS virus. However, ecocentrism merely seeks to cultivate a *prima facie* orientation of non-favouritism: it does not mean that humans cannot eat or act to defend themselves or others (including other threatened species) from danger or life-threatening diseases.” (Eckersley, 1992, p. 57).

She goes on to suggest how someone adopting the ecocentric stance would respond to conflicts of interest over resources.

“When faced with a choice, however, those who adopt an ecocentric perspective will seek to choose the course that will minimize such harm and maximize the opportunity of the widest range of organisms and communities—*including ourselves*—to flourish in their/our own way. This is encapsulated in the popular slogan 'live simply so that others (both human and nonhuman) may simply live'.” (Eckersley, 1992, p. 57).

This approach would seem to imply a subtle evaluating or negotiating which may be better viewed as somewhere between deep and shallow ecology, an 'intermediate ecology' as Carter has termed it (1999, p. 351).

As the ecocentric approach has become widely known in academic circles and by those expressing environmental concern it has received increasing criticism. One such criticism is that it is impossible to perceive the world

other than from an anthropocentric perspective since people are all without exception human. However as Eckersley has highlighted this criticism holds only if the simple, trivial and tautological use of the term 'anthropocentric' is used. There is also a substantive meaning to the term, where 'humans are able to remind themselves that other meanings exist' (Eckersley, 1992, p. 56). Warwick Fox points out that

"The tautological fact that everything I think and do will be thought and done by a male with white skin does not mean that my thoughts and actions need be sexist or racist in the strong, informative, substantive sense, that is, in the sense of exhibiting unwarranted differential treatment of other people on the basis of their sex or race - which is the sense that really matters." (Fox, 1990, p. 20).

Secondly Martin Lewis has observed that there appears to be a contradiction in the fact that eco-philosophers like Arne Naess encourage individuals to invest in 'Self-realisation', part of which is developing their own eco-philosophies, his being considered only one among many. However at the same time he and other deep ecologists 'dismiss virtually the entire heritage of Western thought as not only morally bankrupt but as actively leading us to ecological destruction' (Lewis, 1992, p. 29). What if people wish to base some of their 'self-realisation' on this thought?

Another criticism that is levelled against the ecocentric view is that it is difficult to translate into social, legal, political or lived practice. How is it possible to ascribe rights to non-human entities, when they cannot agree or reciprocate (Eckersley, 1992, p. 57)? Not all ecocentric thinkers see the necessity to ascribe rights to non-human nature. However some like Christopher Stone do not consider the possibility 'unthinkable' on the basis that legal rights are presently conferred on 'non speaking' persons such as infants and foetuses (Eckersley, 1992, p. 58).

Finally considerable criticism has been levelled at the tendency of ecocentric philosophers to appeal to a metaphysical reality beyond scientific scrutiny, upon which I will now comment.

2.3.5 Spirituality and Deep Ecology

The connection between deep ecology and a wider metaphysical or spiritual understanding of reality has been commented on by Sutton.

“In particular the deep ecology philosophical strand of eco-radicalism, Naess; Devall; Sessions; Fox, together with some varieties of ecofeminism emphasise the importance of developing Green Spirituality, which at the far end of the spectrum moves into new age beliefs about the future development of humanity and its relationship to nature.” (Sutton, 2000, p. 137).

What form does this ‘Green Spirituality’ take in the other sections of the spectrum? Rik Scarce helps complete the picture.

“Deep ecology’s spiritualism and that of ecophilosophy in general is eclectic, drawing extensively on Native American metaphysics and spiritual practices and other traditions as well, including Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Christianity.” (1990, p. 39).

Clearly there is a preference for the Eastern religions in his list (see also Merchant, 1992, p. 100), however it is important not to make assumptions about the practice and beliefs of Western eco-philosophers and activists. Guha and Tomalin have highlighted the differences, present and past, between these religious traditions and the meanings appropriated by Western activists and eco-philosophers (Tomalin, 2009, p. 68). Guha believes they are motivated by a need to authenticate their philosophy in history and the global context.

“I have indicated that this appropriation of Eastern Traditions is in part dictated by the need to construct an authentic lineage and in part a desire to present deep ecology as a universalistic philosophy.” (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 2000, p. 97).

This need for an authentic historic lineage is a theme I will take up again in Chapter 8.3. What is important to identify here is the wider context of eco-philosophers and activists which may well have influenced the specific context of this study.

Ecofeminists have also been criticised for co-opting Native American traditions and other indigenous peoples religious traditions, in a similar way placing new and different meanings conducive to their own agenda (Gaard, 1993, p. 308; Hay, 2002, p. 80).

“What Eurocentric outsiders identify as the ‘spiritual’ dimensions of a culture may actually be a thoroughly eviscerated spirituality that a dualistic world-view cannot even perceive. And regrettably, some aspects of Euro-American ecofeminism have ‘borrowed’ from these cultures those parts that resonate with a non-instrumental view of

human nature and have depoliticized the context for these views.”
(Carol Adams quoted in Hay, 2002, p. 80).

I will in Chapter 4.6 continue to explore the theme of co-opting, appropriating and borrowing. This will then be further built upon in Chapter 8 as I consider the authoritative aspects of co-opted traditions in environmental communities.

2.4 Conclusions

In this Chapter I have described the important features of the NSM theories which will be built upon in the following analytical chapters 5 to 9. This will be particularly key in relation to pluralism or a pluralistic ethic and an emphasis on cultural concerns, both features evident within environmental communities. I have also outlined the historical development of environmental movements noting the growth of differing strands, human ecology, deep ecology and the ecocentric approach. As will become apparent in Chapter 5 and 6 these differences correlate to similar differences in how community members interact with nature and also relates to differences between urban and rural contexts. Finally I turned my attentions to spirituality and the deep ecology/ecocentric approaches describing some of the complexities of how religion and spirituality interrelates with the environmental theme. The material here will be built upon in Chapter 4. I will now in the next chapter described the major features of environmental communities. However I begin by moving away from the environmental theme by describing the historical influences of previous alternative communal movements.

~ Chapter 3 ~ Environmental Communities

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this Chapter is to describe the major features of environmental communities. To begin with I briefly review the historical literature relating to alternative communities during the 19th century. After this I comment in more detail upon the 1960s communes movement since this movement is generally considered to have significantly influenced present day environmental communities (Pakulski, 1991, p. 186 & 188). Also in this section, I build upon themes addressed in the previous chapter by outlining features of the communes movement that align neatly with NSM theories. Having summarised the relevant historical influences I then identify and elaborate upon environmental communities more generally, pausing to pay particular attention to a specific form which incorporates the features of 'low-impact development'. This is necessary in order to understand the two rural 'low-impact' communities that form part of the study. Next I consider the various sociological understandings of alternative communities and environmental communities. This includes my assessment of the typologies that sociologists have employed to make sense of the diverse forms of alternative communities. I highlight the limitations of these typologies in relation to environmental communities and propose a new typology. The literature reviewed and information provided here will augment the reader's understanding of environmental communities in general and help locate the communities that form the study within the broader movement context.

3.2 Alternative Communities in the 19th Century

It will be helpful to outline in brief the history of alternative communities in the 19th century, as some of the dominant themes appear to have continued or been readopted in the 21st century. Dennis Hardy's study of 'Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England' (1979) offers a particularly helpful summary of the communities within this period. Hardy orders his analysis into four main categories: Utopian Socialism, Agrarian Socialism, Sectarianism and Anarchism. He considers Utopian Socialism as being principally motivated by political concerns and the social relationships between humans, and holds an expectation that future social arrangements may be continually improved. Although rural contexts often figured in the

utopian ideal, the benefit of human connection with the land is not emphasised. This can be contrasted with his next category Agrarian Socialism where the focus was likewise on the political but nevertheless expressed a clear commitment to the land. He notes that communities grouped under this category were in fact diverse, but 'what holds them together as a type was a common commitment to the land, and their general egalitarian objectives' (1979, p. 75). 'Back to the land' was one theme that appealed to many people towards the end of the 19th century. This phenomenon has been attributed by some to a reactionary movement in response to increasing industrialisation and urbanisation (1979, p. 79). But any idealism bound up in these agrarian notions was quickly quashed as communitarians who had become estranged from rural work patterns experienced the crude realities of living off the land (1979, p. 107). Hardy's next category of 19th-century communities is Sectarianism. Here the central focus is on religious belief, or to be more accurate Christian belief, this being the dominant religion of England at that time. This category he subdivides further into three sections: communards focused on the second coming of Christ and wishing to withdraw to prepare for the event (millennialism), communards wishing to withdraw from 'the world' so as not be contaminated by other non-believers or heretics and communards that believed in an ideal form of Christian community, that may one day be adopted by everyone. This last group had considerable overlap with the earlier category of Utopian Socialism in that some within this category were also motivated by Christian beliefs and were attempting to bring about an evolution of humanity from 'fall to grace' (1979, p. 35). Hardy's final category is communities focused on Anarchism. Here the motivation for establishing community was to escape from the nation state and its oppressive laws. The alternative anarchist community was usually considered a living demonstration of what humans could achieve when set free from human-made laws (1979, p. 167). Also recognised within this category by Hardy is religious anarchism, exclusively Christian, (1979, p. 172) which at that period was mainly associated with the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1979, p. 200). Although Hardy's focus was predominantly on the UK context, similar types of communities were also developing within the USA. On that continent however those concentrating on religious, sectarian concerns, significantly outnumbered those focussed on socialist political concerns (Zablocki, 1980, p. 36).

What I would like to draw out from this analysis is that these four major ideological concepts are, in many respects, reflected within present day environmental communities. In relation to the political ideologies

agrarianism, socialism and anarchism are all present. Diverse forms of religion and spirituality also feature. However, as will be detailed later, many environmental communities exhibit a number of these political and religious stances within the same community, indicating the existence of a pluralistic ethic (Schlosberg, 2004, p. 533). This appears to be different from the alternative communities of the 19th century, at least different to the accounts produced by the historians commenting on these communities. In order to understand this development, from communities coalescing around largely singular ideologies to communities that exhibit disparate political and religious ideologies, I will examine the countercultural movements of the 1960s.

3.3 1960s Communes Movement

Towards the end of the 1960s in the United States of America a new communal movement began to develop (*Eurotopia*, 2000, p. 22; Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 212). These communes formed part of wider social change associated with the 1960s countercultural movements (Roszak, 1969, p. xii). The number of communes that were established during this period in the USA was unprecedented; estimates range from between 2000 to 3000 (Kanter, 1972, p. 166; Oved, 2013, p. 51). Although the dominant themes of the earlier periods could be detected (socialism, anarchism, agrarianism, sectarianism) (Oved, 2013, p. 9) the 1960s communes movement had additional features which were very different. The sociologist Rosabeth Kanter is particularly helpful in comparing these different movements, as she has studied and commented upon both (1972). She notes that the new communes were much smaller than in the past, usually less than 30 adults and in this respect they really resemble a nuclear family structure.

“The grand utopian visions of the past have been replaced by a concern with relations in a small group. Instead of conceptions of alternative societies, what is emerging are conceptions of alternative families. Whereas communes of the past were described in books about Socialism, Communism, and cooperation, communes today are increasingly discussed in books about the family.” (Kanter, 1972, p. 165).

I will comment further on this shift from politics and society to close community and family below. Her other major observation, which relates to this, is that many 1960s communards expressed concerns associated with individual fulfilment. Their desire for community was therefore matched

equally by their desire for individual personal growth (Kanter, 1972, p. 167). This particular shift clearly related to changes taking place within Western societies more generally, namely the 'subjective turn' or 'turn to the self' (Heelas, 1996, p. 160) whereby the locus of attention centred upon the individual and their interior life. This more individualistic and internal approach introduced other novel concerns, such as exploration of personal experiences whilst being under the influence of psychedelic drugs (Speck, 1972) and individual spiritual experiences often via appropriated Eastern religious practices (Hall, 1978, p. 113). Those predisposed to a more scientific outlook explored personal and group psychotherapy, they perhaps being influenced by the continuing dominance of scientific thought within the 20th- century. This individualistic approach did indeed have an influence upon a number of communes and their group ideology. As Kanter argues the previously traditional method of group bonding, ideology, consequently became either obsolete or heterogeneous (Oved, 2013, p. 269).

“Related to the pervasiveness of the personal fulfilment ethic is the rise of non-utopian communes. An outgrowth of the hippie movement, these groups share property, close relations, and a livelihood, but they lack ideology or programs of social reform... They develop from friendships rather than groups welded together by shared ideology; their basis is solidarity.” (Kanter, 1972, p. 167).

The inevitable consequences of the less ideological approach was a preoccupation with cultural, relational and emotional aspects of communal life (Zicklin, 1983, p. 69). This feature then, along with heterogeneous ideologies, is similar to the characteristics of the wider movement which were noticed by the sociologists developing New Social Movement theories. Another significant difference between the 19th-century alternative communities and communes identified by Kanter concerns time.

“Communes of the past were often looking ahead, anticipating the future and building on their concept of history... More often today, however, communes are looking behind them, towards a romanticised past, turning their backs in horror on the movement of history.” (Kanter, 1972, p. 168; Also see Melville, 1972, p. 158).

The apocalyptic fears of this era, nuclear and conventional war, environmental destruction and pollution, no doubt played a role in the erosion of trust toward continual progress in the future. Echoing romanticism's tendency to be enthused by past societies (medievalism for instance), communes became inspired by pre-industrial societies and

indigenous peoples (Berger, 1981, p. 93; Kanter, 1972, p. 37; Melville, 1972, pp. 146, 170; Mills, 1973, p. 5), in one sense looking more to Eden than utopia (Jerome, 1975). Associated with this contrast were different attitudes towards land and nature in rural contexts. It appears 1960s communes, many of which focused on macrobiotic foods and enjoying nature, related to the land and nature in a distinctly different way.

“In the 19th century utopian communities, “communing with nature” was generally not an end in itself; agrarian culture was often a means of support rather than an explicit value. Technology was also employed, for practically all of the 30 communities studied engaged in light industry as well as farming. Retreat, for today's communes, however, involves rejection of all the places, behaviours, and values most characteristic of modern American society.” (Kanter, 1972, p. 177).

19th century alternative communities appear to have emphasised the value of land and nature in terms of economy and survival; this secured the possibility of an alternative life, largely independent from mainstream society. 1960s communes however were very often explicitly challenging materialism and consumer culture. Financial support from outside the commune coupled with low levels of consumption meant that produce from the land was not so crucial for survival. This therefore enabled communitarians to view and interact with nature in a different way, one that placed value on what they observed and enjoyed within nature.⁹ This development then, the explicit valuing of nature by the communal group, would seem particularly relevant to this study, I will be commenting upon this theme further in Chapters 5 and 9.

Thus far I have been commenting mainly upon literature describing the US communes movement. However all of the above features that I have acknowledged were also identified by sociologists commenting on the communes movement within the UK, this beginning and ending slightly later (1969 – 1980) (Halfacree, 2006, p. 314). The number of communes

⁹ I am not claiming that nature was not appreciated or valued within the previous communal ventures, only that the economic element necessitated a different relationship to the land.

established in the UK was far smaller than the USA: estimates range from 50 to 300 (Rigby, 1974a, p. 4). The most significant sociological commentators for this era were Andrew Rigby (1974b) and Philip Abrams and Andrew McCulloch (1976). Andrew Rigby eventually adopted a communal lifestyle himself and frequently writes of his own personal experience. Abrams and McCulloch in contrast maintained a critical distance and although adopting the participant observation method for their team of researchers, clear limits were delineated that seem to have hampered relationships with the commune members (1976, p. 18).

The only feature commented on above that did not fully mirror the context within the USA related to the agrarian, pastoral focus. Within the UK the political concerns about the environment and the valuing of nature in and of itself were not as prevalent as in the USA (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976; Coates, 2013; Rigby, 1974a, 1974b). Literature comparing the movements is slender and I have not come across any references to why this apparent discrepancy existed. It may well have related to historical attitudes to nature and the feasibility of gaining access to the land.¹⁰ The clearest example I have found of the explicit valuing of nature in the UK context is contained in this interview transcribed here by Andrew Rigby.

“At the risk of being accused of wanting to ‘get back to nature’ or ‘back to the land’, let us admit that that is indeed just what we want. It seems to us, and we don't pretend to be unique in this, that we have come too far from natural things, from growth and air and light, from the seasons of fruiting and decay and from the sources of creativity, maturity, and self-knowledge. While not particularly wanting to live a ‘primitive’ life in any sense, we do feel that a closer relationship with

¹⁰ Derek Wall has commented on the differences between EF! (UK) and EF! (USA) which could also relate to the discrepancy. He maintains that a lack of wilderness in the UK and the socially constructed understandings of the landscape have resulted in the development of qualitatively different movements. “The social myth of the British countryside is based on a landscape created largely during the last 200 years by processes of the enclosure of common land.” EF! (UK) therefore tends to emphasises the social aspects of environmentalism (Wall, 1999, p. 149).

plants, trees, and unpolluted air than that possible in a town is desirable and essential.” (Rigby, 1974a, p. 34).¹¹

Within these communal movements then, there is evidence of a turn towards the environmental theme and the explicit valuing of nature.

3.4 Environmental Communities UK

The rise of environmental communities is not easily charted since it is in essence entwined with both the development of environmental politics and conservation more generally, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, and the environmental concern that I have identified above within the 1960s communes movement (Oved, 2013, p. 222; Pakulski, 1991, p. 186).

Nevertheless, by the early 1990s a new communal movement concerned about environmental issues could be identified (Pepper & Hallam, 1991). The vanguard of this new movement were re-orientated communes of the 1960s and 1970s (Maxey, 2002, p. 41). Still another significant boost came on the back of the EDA movement, specifically the 1990s road protests. Aspects of the EDA movement, especially the role of religion and spirituality have played, will be discussed in the next chapter.¹²

I begin this section by discussing the various terms used to describe these communities. ‘Environmental Communities’ is the term I have consistently used in this study. It is a term not often used within the movement and therefore it is not loaded with particular meanings. David Pepper in his book ‘Communes and the Green Vision’ employs the term ‘Communes’ when investigating the early development of environmental communities. This would seem natural, since most of the communities forming part of his study formed in the 1970s when the term was still commonplace (1991, p. 1). As I have noted earlier, the term ‘commune’ was firmly resisted by most

¹¹ Other instances (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 20; Rigby, 1974a, pp. 154,168 241-143).

¹² As will become apparent all three of the communities forming part of the study relate to this later phase of development. It is for this reason that I have paid particular attention to the 1990s road protests and the development of ‘low-impact’ communal living. My assertion here of essentially two phases of development are founded upon the previous history of community members interviewed and the discernible increase of communities beginning mid to late 1990s, see the Diggers and Dreamers and Radical Routes websites, see references.

community members that I interviewed. 'Eco-villages' is also a popular term used by environmentalists to describe environmental communities (Inter alios, Christian, 2007; Conrad, 1995; Dawson, 2006; Jackson & Svensson, 2002). The term has become associated with a number of larger communal ventures (150 - 400 adults) across the globe (Conrad, 1995). The number of community members residing in these villages necessitates different social structures to that of small-scale communal ventures. These differences, which primarily relate to social interactions ('gemeinschaft' and 'gesellschaft'), will be discussed below. Finally 'sustainable communities' is also a term frequently used by environmentalists to identify environmental communities. The theme of sustainability within environmental concern generally has been diversely interpreted. Whilst reviewing relevant literature I did come across many studies that related purely to the material aspects of local communities, for example carbon reduction. 'Community' in these studies was defined as neighbours living within a close urban or suburban geographical area. As Hugh Barton has noted, the term sustainable communities can be used to describe very different concerns; "contrast for example the priorities of the nature-loving 'eco-warriors' with those of local politicians favouring job creation" (Barton, 2000, p. 6). As will become apparent below (3.5.1), there are palpable differences between such community neighbourhoods and the communities that form part of this study (Rogerson, 2011). The term is further complicated by the 'Sustainable Communities Act 2007' a private members bill passed to ensure the provision of local services and amenities. Due to these wider, more comprehensive definitions, I will not employ the term to describe the communities within this study, preferring to retain the term 'environmental communities'.

3.4.1 Characteristics of Environmental Communities

In defining the specific characteristics of environmental communities I will be blending my own fieldwork and two academic sources:¹³ David Pepper's

¹³ Sociological studies on environmental communities generally, within the UK context, are few and far between, a fact highlighted by Ian Maxey (2002, p. 322). Keith Halfacree from the discipline of geography has commented extensively on the 'back to the land' theme which he has associated with environmental activists setting up communities in rural contexts (2006). As one would expect, various participants within the

study 'Communes and the Green Vision'(1991) as previously mentioned and Ian Maxey's sociological study 'One Path Forward?: Three Sustainable Communities in England and Wales' (2002). Ian Maxey's study is particularly relevant in that it was conducted much later than David Pepper's study and it centred upon one community in an urban context and two communities within a rural context, this mirroring my selection.

The substantive nature of environmental communities is remarkably similar to the previous 1960s communes which I have described above. The environmental theme has of course developed to become the central concern but aside from that they contain many of the same features.

Environmental communities are generally small in scale, resembling a close commune format or family of 5-25 adults (Maxey, 2002, pp. 93, 95; Pepper & Hallam, 1991, pp. 4, 14).¹⁴ Where ideological beliefs, both political and religious, are expressed they are noticeably diverse even within a single community (2002, pp. 66, 213, 240, 266; 1991, p. 101). The dominant political concerns were very similar - anarchism, feminism, socialism, pacifism, liberalism (1991, p. 101) - as were the various forms of religious practice - Alternative Spiritualities, Tai Chi, Meditation, Yoga, Taoism and Paganism (2002, p. 237; 1991, pp. 65,108,187). Not all community members were comfortable identifying with ideologies and some were particularly resistant to the use of labels in general (2002, pp. 106, 267; 1991, p. 107). Invariably then, group bonding revolved around solidarity, this being located within personal relationships, emotional ties and cultural norms (2002, pp. 105, 110, 159, 260, 268, 319; 1991, p. 107). Also present was an emphasis on being committed to the process of the group rather than fixed rules (2002, pp. 214, 316; 1991, p. 118), this in turn introducing an element of

movement have also published contributions which I will occasionally refer to e.g. (Castro, 1996; Laughton, 2008; Schwarz & Schwarz, 1998).

¹⁴ The Findhorn community and the Camphill trust communities would be the exception to my comments here; they are much larger in scale and could more accurately be termed Eco-Villages. Holtsfield, which forms part of Maxey's study, and Tepee Valley (Fairlie, 1996, p. 85) also accommodate larger groups of people, however the dominant ethic in these instances appears to be the individual's right to live upon the land, the resultant diversity seems to run counter to the communal structures and ideologies that are central to this study (Maxey, 2002, p. 107).

contingency (Kanter, 1972, p. 167; 2002, p. 323).¹⁵ Self-fulfilment and personal development were also considered important elements within community life (2002, p. 216; 1991, p. 14), and a tolerant approach was adopted in relation to personal exploration of sexuality and spirituality (1991, p. 22). Environmental communities, in keeping with their commune predecessors, are predisposed to looking back¹⁶, valorising the wisdom and social structures of tribal and 'primitive' peoples. (2002, p. 41; 1991, p. 65). Finally, as may perhaps be expected, the experiences of communing with nature, were considered central to the life of the environmental communities (1991, p. 120). Every interaction with nature, whether it be related to leisure, health, spirituality, economy or food, was evaluated positively (2002, pp. 109,217,226).

Furthermore, environmental communities on the whole also reflect the environmental social movements from which they have grown. In this respect then, Chapters 2 and 4, especially in relation to radical ecology and environmental direct action, reflect the forms of religion, spirituality and politics existing within environmental communities. As has been partly outlined above and will be added to below, they are diverse in relation to the ideological component. This particular attribute then was transmitted from the movement level to environmental communities. Recognition of this process has not been noted by either Pepper or Maxey; but is in my opinion it is crucial in deducing the role of religion, spirituality and politics within environmental communities. Indeed all the literature pertaining to environmental communities contains slender content in relation to religion and spirituality. This study below will provide an in-depth description and analysis of this area. I will also elaborate on some of the tensions and difficulties of adopting social movement structures within more settled small-scale communities.

¹⁵ The identification of the temporary commune phenomenon in relation to the 1960s communes movement (Kanter, 1972, p. 167; Speck, 1972; Veysey, 1978, p. 458) in many ways prefigures Maffesoli's theory of Neo-tribes (1996) (see Chapters 4.6) Also note Doyle and McEachern observations of constant redefinition within environmental movements more generally, this feature may therefore be considered a continuation of this pattern (Doyle & McEachern, 2001, p. 61).

¹⁶ Melucci also notes the same trait within social movements more generally (1996, p. 351)

At this juncture I will to comment briefly upon Ian Maxey's analysis of the theoretical approaches to studying environmental communities. He appears to criticise David Pepper's assertion that communal groups can be categorised into singular theoretical approaches.

“Sustainable communities need be as varied as possible in order to maximise their appeal and engage with a range of social, cultural and ecological contexts...Pepper makes sweeping deterministic assertions about communards’ ‘theoretical and practical approach to social change’ (p.201) as though it were singular and inevitably ‘idealist rather than materialist’.... If the literature agrees more consistently on one aspect of intentional communities than any other it is their incredibly variety and diversity of forms, values and beliefs. Within communities, as the literature demonstrates, there are many different theoretical and practical approaches to social change”(Maxey, 2002, pp. 65-66).

He is surely right to criticise Pepper on these grounds for his tendency to search for a grand singular narrative is discernible, perhaps inevitable given his Marxist stance (1991, p. 211). Equally though, Maxey’s plain assertion that diverse values and beliefs are ubiquitous without some reflection on their underlying unity or inherent tensions between them is too simplistic. I think both commentators have overlooked the important distinction between social movements and small-scale communities. There is little doubt that large scale social movements such as those that arose in the 1960s have been both successful and diverse in terms of theory and ideology. I have already outlined in Chapter 2 New Social Movement theories indicating their significance. However Maxey’s assertions here relate to small-scale communal ventures. It is not a foregone conclusion that social structures employed successfully at movement level will be equally successful at the small-scale commune level. Important differences exist in regard to the number of participants and the type of relationships that form. There is some resemblance here with the different levels of ‘collective identity’, as discussed in Chapter 2.2 - differences between the movement level and affinity group level. Additionally many sociologists have identified forces (homogenising forces) and tendencies which appear to influence small groups to adopt a unified theoretical approach and common culture. I will take up this theme again in Chapter 9 when I consider aspects relevant to community bonding.

Inevitably environmental communities differ in their physical form one from another, usually as a result of geographical elements. Nevertheless a particular type of environmental community can be distinguished within the movement, a type significantly defined by 'low-impact' development.

3.4.2 Low-Impact Development

The two rural communities that will be examined in in this study have adopted a particular form of communal living which can be described as 'low-impact'. Their pattern of development and way of life is similar to the UK road protest camps of the 1990s, in which many community members were involved. 'Low-impact' development is a term devised by Simon Fairlie (Fairlie, 1996; Pickerill & Maxey, 2009), who had a significant part to play in the establishment of the Tinkers Bubble community and 'the land is ours' campaign.¹⁷ Fairlie has identified nine criteria that define a low-impact development: it should be temporary, small-scale, unobtrusive and made from predominantly local materials, it should protect wildlife and enhance biodiversity, it should consume low levels of non-renewable resources, it should generate little traffic, it should be used for a low-impact or sustainable purpose, it should be linked to a recognised positive environmental benefit (Fairlie, 1996, p. 55). He accepts that few buildings are likely to conform to all these criteria but a significant low-impact building is likely to conform to many of them. The environmental communities in this study (Raven Hill and Yosemite) utilise bender structures which are essentially tarpaulins draped across bent over hazel poles. Recycled window frames and other building materials are integrated with this basic structure. This type of building is sometimes termed 'Organic architecture' or as in the USA, 1960s communes movement 'biodegradable architecture' (Melville, 1972, p. 158), see figure 1 below. Commonly an old-fashioned rural lifestyle is fused with highly advanced technology, as indicated here in this description of a low-impact development by Fairlie.

¹⁷ Tinkers Bubble is a 'low-impact' type of environmental community established in 1994. 'The land is ours' campaigns peacefully for access to the land, its resources and the decision-making processes affecting them, for everyone, irrespective of race, gender or age. See references for websites below.

“The occupants are gradually acquiring renewable energy hardware, such as solar panels and wind generator, piece by piece, whilst continuing to use paraffin for lighting and wood for heating. The site provides its own water and sewerage services, in the form of composting Earth closets, which are eventually backfilled and planted with a tree. The relatively low income needed to maintain this lifestyle is derived from either local casual or part-time labour, or from income support. Use of local facilities, trip sharing and cycling reduce the need for travel.” (Fairlie, 1996, p. 87).

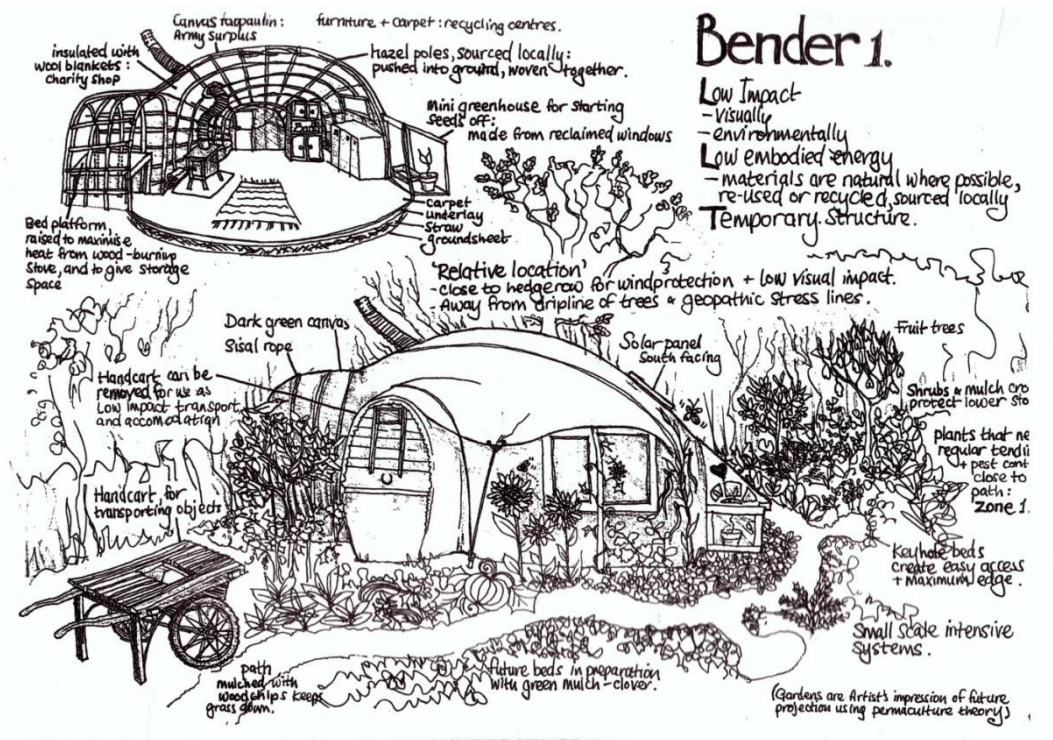


Figure 1. Illustration of 'low-impact development', source : Yosemite community

Tensions surrounding the adoption of technology within this type of development are relevant to this study as is the degree to which community members in the study described this lifestyle as assisting them to live closer to nature. As will be seen in Chapter 5, community members consciously choose such structures and lifestyle to reduce the impact of technology and to draw nearer to the land, their food and nature. In the coming chapters I will identify an impulse or tendency for community members to seek direct experiences of nature, I will employ the term 'nature connection' to describe this activity. These direct experiences of nature over time contribute to form a particular type of community bonding which I term 'organic embodied solidarity' (see Chapter 9.4.1). The low-impact lifestyle was not the only

concept that could be identified within environmental communities. The principles of Permaculture are also commonly referred to and, as will become apparent, some communities appear to employ the term in an ideological or spiritual sense.

3.4.3 Permaculture

Rebecca Laughton has noted that environmental communities have long been associated with the Permaculture movement (2008, p. 145).

Permaculture is a mixture of practical design and environmental philosophy. Bill Mollison, the father of permaculture, defines it thus ;

“Perma(nent agri)culture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems, which have the diversity, stability and resistance of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and nonmaterial needs in a sustainable way. Without permanent agriculture, there is no possibility of a stable social order.”(Quoted in Jackson & Svensson, 2002, p. 18).

A key aspect of permaculture is the principle of ‘zoning’. To maintain a harmonious balance between human needs and nature, human activity is ordered into five distinct zones: 1. homes and food 2. close public space and orchards 3. large open spaces and community gardens 4. reserves, fuel forests, windbreaks 5. wildlife corridors, native plant sanctuaries (ibid). The rural environmental communities in this study are ideally placed to implement the zoning aspects of permaculture. Along with other rural environmental communities they embrace permaculture design principles and operate as a base for permaculture education courses. Such courses both promote the principles of permaculture and secure some financial income for the community. Although more common in rural contexts, permaculture principles are also adopted within urban contexts (Fairlie, 1996, p. 126). The urban community within this study (Brecon) also worked to permaculture principles within the rear gardens and allotments that they cultivated.

Given that part of the permaculture approach is guided by ethics, for instance valuing integration and diversity (Holmgren, 2002, p. 1), some practitioners consider it is more than just a practical system. They maintain that for them a spiritual underpinning exists, one which centres on the internal life of the person. This inner personal zone is usually defined as ‘zone 00’ and added to the list above. When described in this manner the

form of spirituality appears to be based on the individuals spiritual experiences of nature whilst practicing permaculture. I have not come across any instances where such individual spiritual experiences are formalised into an ideological component, one that may possibly unite practitioners. Within the communities studied permaculture remains ambiguous in relation to spirituality, an aspect identified by some community members (Int 18 35:40). An article from the 'Permaculture Works' magazine illustrates well the connection that some community members make with regard to spirituality. The article is titled 'Pagan Permaculture', Adam Garland, a dedicated Pagan and High Priest, explains why he considers that a major correlation between the two exists.

“The design course taught us right from the word ‘go’ that the object of Permaculture was that everything boils down to energy and to retain, reuse or recycle this energy within the system; energy from soil, wind, the sun, or water. In paganism, the many polytheistic pathways or ethnic societies, the four elements of the Earth, Air, Fire and Water are honoured in rites and rituals. Similarly, zone 00 we are told is the spirit which goes on inside ourselves. This links to paganism as, during the casting of the ritual circle, the central position is retained for the spirit; whether personal or that of the Gods/Goddess is a matter for the practitioner, but the link is there.”
(Permaculture Works volume iii issue 7 autumn 2011 page 17).

The article is written in a pluralistic tenor, one that does not seek to define permaculture in a dogmatic way. There is recognition that some who practice permaculture would not describe it as spiritual in any sense. Permaculture then is not consistently associated with spirituality; it is perceived differently by different community members and as will become apparent these different understandings reduce permaculture's ability to bond community members together.

The educational organisations formed to further permaculture principles produce ample opportunities for interaction with between members of different communities and individual permaculturalists. I would now like to consider these and other regular social interactions that take place.

3.4.4 Interactions Beyond the Environmental Community

No matter how reclusive some environmental communities may wish to remain, they eventually need to interact with wider social networks and

economies. Here I will discuss the main external interactions that I observed during my stay and those discussed in the interviews. The primary interactions beyond the community relate to the wider social movement. Personal friendships, campaign loyalties, spiritually orientated gatherings and working partnerships all continued long after a movement participant joins a community. However it can also be noted that in rural contexts such interactions lessened over time. It appears that geographical distances are relevant in these instances.¹⁸ Another opportunity for interaction is provided by communal support groups such as Radical Routes or the LILI network.¹⁹ Radical Routes is a member controlled organisation that describes itself as a network. Part of the organisation is titled Rootstock; this arm assists politically active collectives in setting up cooperative communities usually by organising financial loans. Radical Routes other significant function is to gather cooperative members together nationally. This happens quarterly, with gatherings usually lasting a full weekend (Coates, 2013, p. 361). Mutual support is facilitated and social activities take place, for example a yearly intercommunity volleyball competition (Coates, 2013, p. 368). Joining the network however is not without its commitments; members are expected to allocate a set amount of time towards bringing about positive social change. Past requirements have included restrictions on personal income to not exceed twice the state benefit level (Coates, 2013, p. 363). LILI (Low-Impact Living Initiative) is yet another mutually supporting organisation. However as you would perhaps expect, the network aims are more orientated towards a 'low-impact' lifestyle within environmental communities. Regular social gatherings also take place where friendships are made and existing friendships strengthened. A quick glance at the corresponding websites would suggest that Radical Routes appears to be more urban orientated, stressing political activism and that LILI attracts a higher percentage of rural environmental communities working more towards exemplary sustainable lifestyle. Another significant tradition which has developed within rural

¹⁸ These claims are based on observations and casual conversations during the fieldwork. As movement participants became communitarians their focus turned to everyday concerns within the community. They had much less time and energy for national campaigns and consequentially much less interaction with those movement participants.

¹⁹ Radical Routes & Low-impact living Initiative (LILI); See references for websites below.

contexts is the engagement with WWOOFers. WWOOF stands for World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, however it is also known informally as Willing Workers on Organic Farms. It is a loose network of national organisations which facilitate the placement of volunteers on organic farms. Environmental communities frequently offer people who signed up to the scheme an opportunity to work within the community in return for food and lodgings. WWOOFing is often recommended to people wishing to explore the possibility of joining a rural environmental community (Laughton, 2008, p. 298). They can experience for a few weeks, sometimes as long as six months, the rural lifestyle. Not all WWOOFers are novices; some are very experienced in communal living and agricultural methods. They are perhaps looking for a new community to join or just simply learning more from the community that they are visiting, either way they offer considerable opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ecological theory and practice.

Lastly, rural environmental communities often spring up close to towns associated with the cultic milieu (Kaplan & Löw, 2002, p. 2), towns such as Glastonbury, Totnes and Stroud. The phrase 'cultic milieu' describes sectors in Western societies in which socially deviant, countercultural knowledge - both spiritual and scientific or quasi- scientific - are brought together by their carriers and proponents, incubating, cross- fertilizing, reproducing, and spreading" (Taylor, 2010, p. 14). The diverse forms of religion and spirituality prevalent within such nearby towns offers an opportunity for community members to be supported in a particular spiritual or religious tradition. I will now turn my attention to the various sociological understandings of alternative communities and environmental communities.

3.5 Sociological Theories Relating to Alternative Communities and Communes.

3.5.1 Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

One early sociological distinction that is often referred to by commentators on communities is Ferdinand Tönnies's distinction between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Hardy, 1979, p. 10; Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 62). Tönnies observed that social interactions between people could be categorised as either belonging to Gemeinschaft (community or communal society) or Gesellschaft (society or associational society). He proposed the distinction as a purely conceptual tool for analysing communities or societies. Gemeinschaft social interactions, then, he defined as predominantly direct, face-to-face interactions, affective, frequently related to

emotions, Tönnies uses the word 'domestic', to define this social coexistence which is distinctly familiar (Tönnies 1957, p. 18). *Gesellschaft* social interactions were in contrast defined as indirect, dependent upon impersonal roles, formal contracts and formal beliefs. Tönnies viewed these types of social interaction as central for 'life in the public sphere' (1957, p. 18). Although Tönnies distinctions are very broad and not always easy to defined, they have some value as a purely conceptual tool to emphasise particular traits, in this case social relations within communities. One of the consistent and recurring narratives from communitarians themselves is a criticism of mainstream culture as being alienating, devoid of intimate and interdependent relationships (Rigby, 1974a, pp. 51-55). What they most appreciate about small communities is the affective relationships and emotional ties that encompass the totality of life. Tönnies' distinction of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* assists in defining and understanding the felt differences in relation to scale so frequently expressed by community members. It perhaps explains why small-scale communities of between 5 to 25 members are experienced very differently from larger communities numbering 50 to 500 (Zablocki, 1980, p. 43). It is simply not possible to have *Gemeinschaft* social interactions with all community members within this larger type of community. In reality of course members of each scale of community will experience both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* interactions, still it is the frequency of such interactions each day and emphasis placed upon the interaction that is relevant here.

I would like to highlight two examples that Tönnies cited to support his theory, these seemingly not mentioned within the literature of other commentators. Firstly Tönnies associates *Gemeinschaft* with a rural context and *Gesellschaft* with a urban context.

"Wherever urban culture flourishes, 'society' also appears as its indispensable medium. Country people know little of it. On the other hand, everyone who praises rural life has pointed to the fact that people there have a stronger and lively sense of Community."
(Tönnies 1957, p. 19).

His observations here are general, community formed in a rural context does not necessarily equate to *Gemeinschaft* social interactions. It is possible for *Gesellschaft* social interactions to dominate such rural contexts and contrariwise in urban contexts. What is worth recognising though is Tönnies' assumptions and perhaps idealisation of the rural lifestyle, his desire can perhaps be attributed to the influence of German romanticism (Bond, 2011).

Associations such as these could throw light upon the 'back to the land' theme commented upon above. Could it be that these communitarians were seeking to secure a long-term *Gemeinschaft* type of community in rural contexts? Secondly Tönnies applied his distinction to religion.

“And if it [the *Gemeinschaft*/*Gesellschaft* distinction] is deemed to be universal, it can be classified as a spiritual or religious commonwealth or state. The forms of such will can be classified as follows: (A) within a *Gemeinschaft* - in the individual through *faith*, and in the group through *religious practice*; (B) within a *Gesellschaft* - in the individual, through *dogma* or *theory*, and in the wider group through popular belief or *public opinion*.” (Tönnies 1957, p. 239) [brackets mine].

Again Tönnies makes a very general observation, yet it is worth noting that his assumptions, although caught up in a particular historical period, may correlate to assumptions of present day communitarians. He associates *Gemeinschaft* with the 'religious practice' of the group; the relational and normative practices therefore become dominant. Within a small *Gemeinschaft* type community, Tönnies would thus expect to find an emphasis upon relational, normative practices and religious practices (cultural) and equally a lesser emphasis on dogmatic belief and theory (ideology). As will be identified below, the three communities forming the study tended to emphasise relational, normative practices and shunned dogmatic forms of religion.

Another dichotomy often employed by commentators is framed as the 'Individual vs. Group' (Laughton, 2008, p. 210; Rigby, 1974a, p. 287; Zicklin, 1983, pp. 40-41). The dynamic expressed within this theory is that an excessive emphasis on either aspect, individual or group, will inevitably deplete the other, hence a compromise is always necessary. Andrew Rigby explains the theory in simple terms.

“One does not necessarily need an autocratic leader for there to develop a totalitarian regime within a commune. The power of group opinion can be felt as equally dictatorial by some. Thus one respondent informed me that the major personal disadvantages of communal living arise 'when there isn't a balance between individual freedom and community'.”(Rigby, 1974a, p. 287).

The drawing out of this dynamic tension is helpful when considering community bonding, especially in relation to ideology, the small social group, and the individual. This tension will be explored in detail below in Chapter 8.

Yet it is still worth noting here that the individual and group components identified above map how a drive towards self-fulfilment and personal development may impact on group cohesion. Ever increasing individuality or individual attachments outside the group can but diminish 'interpersonal harmony' and the 'we feeling' (Kanter, 1972, pp. 57,73,93). In Ian Maxey's opinion environmental communities generally err toward individualism, a fact he attributes to the wider Western context.²⁰

“However, my research suggests firstly that the decline in communalism Metcalf identifies is reversed in some groups and secondly that given our starting point in the West intense commune like structures may not be that sustainable. Given that sustainable communities require diversity and that most people are starting from unsustainably high levels of materialism and individualism.” (Maxey, 2002, p. 317).

Maxey does not elaborate on why sustainable communities require diversity. He appears to be adopting a pragmatic approach, one that challenges the viability of the commune format whilst accepting the reality of mainstream society within the UK. Finally this dichotomy also relates to the different political ideologies expressed by community members. Here I am thinking of anarchism and liberalism, which privilege the individual when compared to say socialism or communism which privileges the group. Organisational structures such as consensus decision-making do ensure that each individual can potentially play a part within the development of the community. However it should not be assumed that such structures will guarantee parity (Gordon, 2008, p. 35).

In the coming chapters I will regularly refer to these longstanding frameworks as they have value in assessing how environmental communities compare to the past communal ventures.

3.5.2 Typologies and Categorisation

Typologies are another method which sociologists have utilised in their attempts to comprehend the various communal ventures. Due to their ever-increasing diversity it has become a similarly difficult task, especially from the 1960s onwards. A number of sociologists have expressed the challenge

²⁰ See Kriesi for a more detailed analysis of NSMs and individualisation in Western Europe (1995).

of the endeavour, citing the bewildering array of communities that need to be included (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 11; Zablocki, 1980, p. 205).

Typologies and classifications are generally based upon: **geography** [urban or rural (Berger, 1981, p. 7)], **ideology** [political or religious (Hardy, 1979, p. 16)], **structure** [retreat or service (Kanter, 1972, p. 212) open or closed (Zablocki, 1980, p. 52) exemplary or adversary (Case & Taylor, 1979, p. 248)] or **time** [synchronic, diachronic or apocalyptic (Hall, 1978, p. 14)].

Environmental communities that form part of this study do not appear to relate to any particular category within the typologies developed. That said some aspects of them do indeed correlate. I will outline here Benjamin Zablocki's comprehensive eightfold categorisation (Table 1. Below) developed in response to the 1960s communes movement as it is one such typology that partly relates to environmental communities.

Strategic Philosophy			
Locus of Attention	Consciousness		
	Consciousness	Direct Action	
Spiritual World*	<i>Eastern</i>	<i>Christian</i>	Religious Communes
Individual Self	<i>Psychological</i>	<i>Rehabilitational</i>	Secular Communes
Primary Group Community	<i>Cooperative</i>	<i>Alternative family</i>	
Secular Society	<i>Countercultural</i>	<i>Political</i>	

* The spiritual world as seen by religious communes includes not only the unseen and holy but also the mundane society invested with sacred meaning. (Zablocki, 1980, p. 205)

Table 1. Reproduction of Zablocki's Eightfold Categorisation

Zablocki's central vertical line is defined by strategic philosophy, which includes consciousness and direct action.

“The strategic philosophies that dominated communitarian thinking in the 1960s and 1970s may be labelled the strategy of *consciousness* (or non-action) and the strategy of *direct action*. Advocates of the former sought change through the evolution of consciousness and generally saw social action as useless or counter-productive. Advocates of the latter held to the belief that the way to change things was through directly applied human effort.” (Zablocki, 1980, p. 204).

This distinction closely correlates to the spiky-fluffy tendencies which were identified within the EDA movement (Letcher, 2003), this important phenomenon I will elaborate upon in Chapter 7. I should point out that Zablocki's definition here of 'direct action' in fact relates to many forms of action beyond the specifically political protest (NVDA) as employed in the civil rights and EDA movements.

Next Zablocki identifies four dominant 'locus of attention'. Spiritual World, Individual Self, Primary Group Community and Secular Society. These then constitute the primary focus for the communities that are being evaluated. Again my analysis below will relate to these categories. In Chapter 8 I will be employing the concept of components (individual, social group and official religion) to elaborate on religious authority within the rural environmental communities. Zablocki also delineates a horizontal line which divides the religious and secular communes, this he concludes is the most significant division within his typology:

“The great majority of spiritually focused communal experiments during this period (1965 - 1975) derived their beliefs either from Eastern Hindu and Buddhist traditions or from the Western traditions of Christianity. Although each of these religious traditions has components of consciousness orientation as well as components of an orientation towards action, it is nevertheless fair to say that the former predominates in Eastern ideologies and the latter in the Christian. The most significant differences among the eight ideological groups, both in membership composition and social structure, are to be found not between the consciousness-orientated and the action-orientated communes but between the spiritual pair of types and the six secular types. Our research substantiates the long-

standing claim that the religious/secular distinction is important in the analysis of communal groups.” (Zablocki, 1980, p. 205).

However as will become apparent in the interviews below the spiritual/secular distinction may not be so crucial within environmental communities. I will outline how the distinction is challenged at the social movement level (Tomalin, 2009, p. 107) and within the organisation and lifestyle of the three communities which form part of the study.

From two ‘strategic philosophies’ and four ‘locus of attention’ Zablocki derives eight types of commune; Eastern, Christian, Psychological, Rehabilitational, Cooperative, Alternative Family, Countercultural and Political. Apart from the religious secular divide no ideological distinctions have been made thus far, hence he subdivides further on the basis of ideological difference. The end result, with three or four different categories for each of the eight types, is 27 sub-variants (1980, p. 206). I will not go into detailed description of all these sub-variants, instead I will summarise briefly the eight main types. *Eastern*: Hindu and Buddhist traditions; *Christian*: Social action and proselytising mission; *Psychological*: self-actualisation and personal development; *Rehabilitation*: personal therapy; *Alternative family*: extended family metaphor; *Cooperative*: collective living; *Countercultural*: alternative lifestyle; *Political*: challenging political structures.

Where do the environmental communities forming part of this study locate within Zablocki typology? It would seem no type completely accommodates their environmental focus. The Cooperative, Countercultural and Political types however appear most relevant reflecting their organisational structures, alternative lifestyle and political concerns. Zablocki’s two main distinctions, strategic philosophy (consciousness and direct action) and religious/secular communes, look to be less relevant in that most environmental communities exhibit all categories. It appears that their primary focus on environment or nature disrupts the more long standing categorisations based on strategic philosophies and metaphysics. I will now define a more relevant typology that distinguishes the subtly different forms within environmental communities. In some respects this typology reflects the distinctions made between environmental movements outlined in Chapter 2.

Strategic Philosophy		
	Exemplary Lifestyle	Direct Action
Embracing high-level technology	<i>Experimental</i>	<i>Activist</i>
Resisting reliance on technology	<i>Nature-centred</i>	<i>Tribal</i>

Table 2. Fourfold Typology of Environmental Communities

Table 2 above defines four categories of environmental community, I would like to make it clear from the beginning that the labels (*Experimental*, *Activist*, *Nature-centred* and *Tribal*) are not so much strictly defined groupings or terms that community members would necessarily use themselves but describe a set of distinctive features that appear to differentiate environmental communities from one another. It is entirely possible, indeed likely, that some communities are best placed in between labels, for example between *Experimental* and *Activist*, in this respect the table can be considered a type of two dimensional spectrum.

The vertical line, strategic philosophy, is similar to that of Zablocki's typology. It distinguishes fundamental differences in the way communitarians seek to bring about change. There will be either an emphasis on enhancing the quality of personal and communal life so as to effect society at large or on making real instrumental progress on matters political (both local and national). The implication of this distinction usually becomes apparent when goals and future objectives are set by the community. I consider this distinction highlights an important difference, not always clearly articulated, that impacts a community's cultural and relational practices. Hence I will be elaborating on these differences later in Chapter 7. The horizontal line is defined by attitudes to technology, a distinction often reduced to a dualism of either Bright Green or Dark Green, (Hitlin & Vaisey, 2010, p. 265; Taylor, 2010); Bright Green being communities who fully embrace advanced technology and consider it a vital aspect in a sustainable future and Dark Green being communities who generally are resistant to technology.

However as I have emphasised earlier there are clearly many shades in between. David Pepper has termed the distinction Eco-centric or techno-centric (Pepper, 1993, p. 33). Distinctions in relation to technology will be helpful in identifying felt differences²¹. Some communities of the Dark Green variety have adopted very strict limits regarding the use of advanced technology and the burning of fossil fuels. These can in turn have far-reaching consequences on day-to-day living. The distinctions I am defining here in regard to technology are supported in Chapters 5.5 and 6.4 where I elaborate further on attitudes to science and technology within the three environmental communities studied.

From these two delineations or spectrums I have adopted four types which I will elaborate upon individually below. But before I do so I would like to comment on why my typology does not include religious or political categories. All the environmental communities that form part of this study are similar to new social movements in that they are ideologically heterogeneous. Religious and political ideologies, although present, were not dominant in community bonding (Pepper, 1993, p. 189). It appears the communities studied by Zablocki did not exhibit such diversity within each community to the same degree as environmental communities. As will be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, it is quite common to find religious, spiritual and atheist communitarians living together. Also significant here are Eyerman and Jamison's observation in relation to the cosmology of environmental movements more generally (see Chapter 2.2.1). They noted a tendency whereby worldviews within environmental movements were seldom discussed or articulated. Instead they operated upon set of assumption which served as ideals rather than ideology (1991, p. 73). It is likely that just such an approach has transferred from environmental movements to environmental communities, downplaying the significance of ideology. I will now comment upon each of my types.

Experimental: Experimental environmental communities seek to be exemplary in a very practical and material way. They often consider themselves to be in the vanguard of developing environmentally sustainable forms of living. Their remit often includes a focus on engineering and

²¹ Eyerman and Jamison's categorisation of 'technological knowledge interest', see Chapter 2.2.1 above, highlights the importance of this category in social movements more generally (1991, pp. 69,75).

technological solutions, these being road-tested, so to speak, within the community. They are mission-focussed in that they have set themselves specific goals and tasks beyond just living life together. Education and practical demonstration projects are often included in the specific goals. They do not necessarily want to radically challenge the dominant social or political structures within mainstream society, preferring to concentrate on practical material solutions. The community grouping at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)²² would accord very well with this category.

Nature-centred: Nature-centred environmental communities seek to be exemplary in their direct interactions with nature. They also consider themselves to be in the vanguard of developing environmentally sustainable forms of living. Their focus however is much less reliant upon the advancement of technology; they instead look to positive experiences of nature and close healthy relationships to redress overconsumption and alienation. In some communities there may be a strong aversion to the use of technology, preferring to experience nature which is considered more direct, rewarding and sustainable. The central aim of these communities is simply living together on the land; in doing so emphasis is placed upon developing a unique culture. Philosophical concepts and practices such as 'permaculture' and 'low-impact living' are sometimes drawn upon. Introducing or reconnecting people with nature is considered a very important element within the community and consequently some experiential courses are facilitated. Given the central place of connecting with nature, such communities are usually set within rural contexts. The two rural communities that form part of this study (Yosemite and Ravel Hill) would correspond closely with this category as would Brithdir Mawr and Tinker's Bubble.²³

Activist: Activist environmental communities intentionally seek to change political and social structures for the betterment of the environment and consequentially humans. The community is established primarily to further the political aspects of environmental concern (Oved, 2013, p. 244), and success is judged on the same criteria. Many 'Activist' communities are members of the Radical Routes network as described earlier in this Chapter

²² Centre for Alternative Technology See References for Websites below.

²³ Tinkers Bubble and Brithdir Mawr See References for Websites below.

and therefore expected to allocate a set amount of time towards bringing about positive social change. Although the adoption of technology is not central in the exemplary sense, advanced technology is regularly and appropriately employed. Direct connection with nature is also appreciated but how this takes place differs from 'Nature-centred' communities. There are usually less opportunities to work the land, and therefore nature is experienced through recreational activities such as hiking, wild swimming and rock climbing. The focus on political structures means that most of these communities are situated in urban contexts where most political decisions are made. The Brecon community which forms part of this study relates well to this category as would Cornerstone and Equinox communities.²⁴

Tribal: Tribal environmental communities seek to defend nature from the destructive effects of industrial development and resource extraction. They engage with political structures through direct action tactics and this usually results in them forming in a rural context, this context in turn offers an opportunity to connect directly with nature. Although engaging with contemporary political structures and discourses, they are nonetheless distrustful of advanced technology. Communities of this type are usually temporary, lasting as long as the protest camp survives.²⁵ Nevertheless they have a place in my typology as transitory, momentary communities concerned with direct political engagement whilst remaining averse to advanced technology. I have termed this category tribal as such communal groupings often draw upon imagery associated with indigenous peoples, native tribes in other countries, some even perceiving themselves as indigenous tribes protecting the homeland (see Chapter 4.6). Beliefs and practices associated with Anarcho-primitivism and Eco-Paganism are also often held by community members. The road protest camps at Fairmile in Devon which will be elaborated upon later in Chapter 7 would correspond with this category as would the Donga Tribe (Taylor, 2005, p. 504).

²⁴ Cornerstone and Equinox Co-operatives See References for Websites below.

²⁵ Given their temporary nature it is possible to make links here with Maffesoli's theory of 'Neo-tribes' which form and disintegrate quickly (Maffesoli, 1996).

The typology I have outlined here will be helpful in locating the three communities that form part of this study within the landscape of environmental communities and Eco-villages more generally.

3.6 Conclusions

I have traced the key characteristics and themes within past communal movements that have influenced the present day environmental communities (sectarianism, socialism, anarchism, agrarianism and pacifism). I have elaborated upon the common features exhibited within environmental communities generally, paying attention to the surrounding context and wider social interactions. Ideologies and social structures were identified as being very similar to the social movements from which environmental communities have developed, principally heterogeneous. It will be noted in the next chapter that this heterogeneous characteristic significantly influenced how religious and spiritual traditions were practiced in the EDA movement and consequently the present day environmental communities. After this I considered the many sociological studies relating to small-scale communities. A number of contrasts or dichotomies, such as 'Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft', were examined and related to environmental communities. Typologies relating to the 1960s communes movement were analysed and found to be problematic or severely limited in relation to environmental communities. To remedy this I proposed a typology which defined four categories, these being helpful for the location of the communities studied within the movement more generally. In the next chapter I will comment upon the forms of religion and spirituality present within the EDA movement and in particular the 1990s road protests, as they significantly influenced the development of environmental communities.

~ Chapter 4 ~ Religion and Spirituality within the Environmental Direct Action Movement (UK)

4.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this Chapter will be the Environmental Direct Action movement (EDA) within the UK. The EDA movement is particularly relevant to this study, in that one of its most successful tactics, protest camps, inspired a new wave of communal living projects. Additionally, most of the community members interviewed in my study had previously been participants in the EDA movement. After briefly outlining the essential culture of the road protest camps, I will comment upon the major forms of religion and spirituality identified: Alternative Spiritualities, Contemporary Paganism, Eco-Paganism and Core Shamanism. I will also comment upon the recurring political concepts within the movement: Social Ecology, Anarchism and Anarcho-Primitivism, explaining the complex pluralist attitudes usually adopted. The inclusion of political concepts will be helpful in understanding interactions within the movement, especially amongst those which criticise both religion and spirituality. The literature reviewed here, along with the discussions relating to religion and spirituality, will form an invaluable base for understanding the community discourses which will be examined in Chapters 7 & 8.

4.2 1990s Road Protest Camps and Culture

Nobody sums up the 1990s road protest movement quite as well as Andy Letcher, movement participant and academic researcher.

“In the 1990s, the then Conservative government launched a massive £23 billion road building scheme as a response to Britain's worsening traffic congestion problems. In the process, they unwittingly instigated the ‘most successful revolutionary movement in Western Europe in the second half of the 20th century’ (Monbiot 1998). Starting with just two people at Twyford Down in 1992 the movement grew, with protests the length of the country from Glasgow to Kent. It culminated at Fairmile in Devon in 1997, after which the Government announced a U-turn and cut the roads budget to just £6 billion. In all cases the protesters used the same tactics: positioning themselves bodily in the way of construction, either by sitting on machinery (called ‘digger

diving') or by placing camps, tree houses, tunnels and locking-on points en route. Their ideal aim was to stop the road from being built at all; their more achievable aim was to add so much extra to the cost of construction that future projects would be rendered unviable. A distinctive protest culture emerged which was derived from the relatively harsh lifestyle of the protest camps" (Letcher, 2001b, p. 148).

Considerable attention is often paid to the political aspects of the road protest campaigns, in particular their peer-orientated organisational structures (Doherty, 2002, p. 121). However, in keeping with new social movement theory, such campaigns relied equally upon the development of an alternative culture or counterculture (Merrick, 1997, p. 52). The protest camp tactic, essentially a land squat, provided abundant opportunities to occupy natural landscapes and define a distinct culture. The space occupied geographically, sometimes for many years, defined a zone in which protesters could practice an alternative lifestyle (Horton, 2002, p. 102), one radically counter to the mainstream (Letcher, 2002, p. 82).²⁶ Coalescing around the affinity-group structure²⁷, groups of protesters formed their own social norms, including acceptable behaviour around the natural environment, fellow protesters and road building contractors (Doherty, 2002, p. 7). As Wall notes this alternative lifestyle also developed its own specific shared cultural codes.²⁸

²⁶ Not all activists made the conscious decision to reject mainstream society. McKay has noted that some were already on the margins of society and drifted towards protest sites, they came to be labelled the 'Brew Crew' an internal discourse raged on the misuse of alcohol, class differences were also apparent in that the 'Brew Crew' were on the whole working class (McKay, 1996, p. 53).

²⁷ The division of labour within EMOs having previously caused considerable disagreement at the grass roots level (Doherty, 2002, p. 131; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 107) resulting in informal organisation bound together by social relationships or friendships, not defined by formal affiliation or membership (Doherty, 2002; Pakulski, 1991, p. 53).

²⁸ Also observed by Plows "*having a **shared cultural code** - dress and lifestyle - can engender and reaffirm a sense of belonging, emotional commitment to the group - here is "us" and what "we" stand for*" (Plows, 2002, p. 47).

“Activist’s lifestyle may include the rejection of car-use, changes to diet, communal living, the occasional ‘ritualised’ practice such as the growing of ‘dreads’ or the avoidance of cosmetic treatments like artificial shampoo, and a general rejection of consumerism. Many activists saw these activities to be politically important in prefiguring a green society, and as a means both of deflecting charges of hypocrisy and of furthering social change..... Communal living, diet, drumming, drugs, dress derived from earlier green cultural networks, all have contributed to the distinctive identity of anti-road camps. Cultural codes, often subtle, were used to maintain boundaries. Thus Styles noted the intensity of personal lifestyle change on entering the movement.” (Wall, 1999, pp. 162,163).

The bonding and solidarity created by a unified lifestyle and culture can have the effect of lessening the role of ideology (see Chapter 9.4.2.2). However, just as an emphasis on ideology can on occasions produce a type of hegemony an emphasis upon cultural codes can also produce its own type of ‘cultural hegemony’ (Plows, 2002, p. 49) or ‘cultural authority’ (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004, p. 9). Even so some differences in culture were noted by Plows.

“Also, many varieties of counterculture and lifestyle exist simultaneously - none more far-reaching possibly than the vegan vs. meat-eating.” (Plows, 2002, p. 112).

I would conclude that this co-existence constituted a reluctant acceptance of diversity, a necessary compromise in the pursuit of wider movement goals.²⁹

David Horton, in his examination of environmental activists more generally, has identified particular behaviour within activist culture, describing such behaviour as ‘green cultural codes’ (2003, p. 75). However he has also identified that over longer periods of time these codes develop into patterns of behaviour which he terms ‘green scripts’. These green scripts then are ‘more settled narratives to which activists must conform’ (2003, p. 68). The

²⁹ Plows also comments on differences more generally within the EDA movement “All [movement participants] have areas where they diverge dramatically from each other, over issues such as **spirituality** and **veganism**, for example, or in the types of **tactics** they use.” (Plows, 2002, p. 151) [brackets and emphasis mine].

implication seems to be that activists may breach individual green cultural codes; however removing themselves from green scripts has a greater consequence upon green identity. Correct adherence to the codes and scripts would therefore produce very positive emotions and connections to the environment and group. It is in this respect that some activists can describe their everyday activities as being significant to their grouping (Int 29 107:04 & Int 32 33:21).

Many movement activists have recorded the stark differences between urban life and the rural protest camp (Merrick, 1997). Living for long periods of time within nature formed, for many movement activists, the basis of a new awareness (Letcher, 2001a, p. 64). Adrian Harris has recognised that this closely correlates to the 'wilderness affect'.

“Although the effect was first noted on North American wilderness treks, there are many correlations with felt experience at a road protest camp. Although such spaces may have been culturally mediated, they retain certain aspects of true wilderness: Relative openness, no advertising, absence of Most 21st century technologies (flick-switch lighting, hot running water, instant heating, t.v. etc.), low tech. living spaces, etc.” (Harris, 2008, p. 194).

I will employ the term 'nature connection' throughout this study to refer to an individual person's embodied interaction with nature, usually over long periods of time. Such 'nature connection' is not however always romantic and pleasurable: movement participants frequently experienced harsh conditions within the natural environment.³⁰

“Life on a protest site makes the reality of our relationship to the environment starkly clear: Dealing with the mud, the rain, and the use and misuse of resources is everyday life: 'The very act of living out, however dependent on wider society for food and so on, puts one in touch with nature in a way that is real, not virtual' (Letcher, 2000)” (Harris, 2008, p. 30).

But these aspects too may have engendered a form of group cohesion by establishing boundaries, for example it is very difficult on-site to remain free of mud and the smell of wood smoke. These visible and sensual differences becoming starkly apparent when the activist ventured back into mainstream

³⁰ Also see (Plows, 2002, p. 166).

society. Bourdieu's concept of habitus as discussed in Chapter 1.2 can be usefully recalled here. These body experiences and social forms could be comprehended as a new or reformed habitus in relation to the organic environment; a habitus distinctly different to mainstream culture.

The group bonding formed by this type of protest eventually led to tribal forms of community (collective identity, group level) elaborated upon in the previous chapters (2.2.1 & 3.5.2).³¹

In the later stages of the 1990s road protests some activists began to explore more proactive and exemplary approaches, they expressed the desire to live out their environmental ethics.

“Also proactive, as well as reactive, campaigns also figure prominently, from small-scale permaculture co-op projects to large scale collective actions such as ‘This Land Is Ours’ and ‘Diggers’ “land-squats”. A noticeable strategic development by the mid/late 90’s was a move to more locally based, ‘community’ actions by protesters keen to build on grassroots ties, slightly shifting the focus away from national campaigns.” (Plows, 2002, p. 53).

What is being referred to here by Alex Plows is the second wave of environmental communities as detailed in the previous chapter. However, there were important differences between the protest camp setting and the more settled environmental communities being formed. The protest camp community had very clear political objectives which united movement participants. By contrast, these new communal ventures would have to define their own objectives (Jamison, 2011, pp. 150-158). I highlight here the difference in strategic tendencies (see Chapter 7), that is the change from ‘voice to exit’ (Case & Taylor, 1979, p. 249), from political engagement to exemplary community (see Chapter 3.5.2). In many ways, both strategic philosophies, spiky-fluffy, had been practiced during the road protest camps, evidenced in the different approaches taken by activists, ‘digger diving’ or ‘camp builders’ respectively (McKay, 1996, p. 136). It could also be asserted that the present-day environmental communities have not totally disengaged with national campaigns in that many continue to be involved with planning

³¹ Also associated with group bonding is group process, the continual discussion in relation to action and understanding. Much of this discussion and mediation appears to have taken place around the campfire (Letcher, 2001b, p. 148).

disputes fighting for the right to live on the land. Nevertheless the proactive approach inevitably led to a greater focus on lifestyle, permaculture and green cultural codes at the expense of challenging political structures directly (Melucci et al., 1989, p. 60).

The predisposition of the EDA movement towards a pragmatic approach, lifestyle and culture (Merrick, 1997, p. 99) facilitated the development of a pluralistic ethic³² in relation to ideology, an ethic that accepted diverse political and religious ideologies (Doyle, 2005, p. 27). It is now my task to elaborate upon these complex, alternative, eclectic, unsystematic theories and traditions (Corrywright, 2001, p. 24; Jamison, 2011, p. 113; Pike, 2001, p. 126). Yet before I do so I would like to comment further on the complex role of ideology generally within the EDA movement. I will begin by commenting on political ideologies, since there is far more academic literature to hand in comparison to religious ideology. Like environmental movements more generally, political ideology within the EDA movement was diverse, 'plural, ambivalent, often contradictory' (Melucci, 1996, p. 78). It required a broader, more nuance approach, to understand it (Doherty, 2002, p. 67) and its inherent diversity led to frustrations for academics who wanted to associate the movement with clear political categories (Pepper & Hallam, 1991). As I have explained previously, this can be attributed to the focus on the pragmatic approach, what works in the here and now, which in many ways moderated the role of theory. Nevertheless political theories were indeed evident within the movement and I would concur with Alex Plows that....

“As commentators on the EDA movement highlight, the way activists organically construct and *apply* green ideology is more pluralist, less 'pure' than the theory, although this isn't to say that activist don't theorise - they do - there is simply a more 'hands-on' pragmatism of grassroots 'organic intellectuals'.” (Plows, 2002, p. 127).

At the grass roots level then political ideologies such as social ecology, ecofeminism, socialism, anarchism and anarcho-primitivism were drawn upon, 'activists (reflexively or not) blur between social ecology, deep ecology

³² I have adopted the term 'pluralistic ethic' to identify the middle ground between 'pluralism' (a fully conscious and explicit valuing of diversity both religious and political) and a 'pluralistic acceptance', (a situation in which diversity of religion and politics is tolerated).

and ecofeminist positions' (Plows, 2002, p. 83) remaining instinctively 'pluralist, diffuse, shifting, with many different positions and weights of emphases' (Plows, 2002, p. 127). This phenomenon appears to have similar features to 'alternative spiritualities' which will be discussed in detail below.³³ Nevertheless Dobson, perhaps responding to criticism of the movement, maintains that the approach has integrity.

"What is more, it is the urgent need to inhibit the environmentally hazardous dynamic that provides the most compelling of motivations for embracing decentralization, participatory democracy, self-sufficiency, egalitarianism, alternative technology, pacifism and internationalism. So, it seems to me, this isn't, after all, a fast-food, cafeteria of political ideology, grabbing from here and there without any rhyme or reason; instead, it seems well-balanced and wholesome. And it's top of today's menu." ³⁴ (Dobson, 1995, p. 54).

This diversity explains why no single political or environmental concept developed into a dominant ideology or was explicitly organised around within the EDA movement (see Chapter 9.4.3.).

This complex approach to political ideology within the EDA movement was similarly applied to religious ideologies; no single religious tradition united participants or directed organisation of the movement. I will be commenting below in much more detail than I have above about the pluralistic ethic and its relationship with religious traditions. I will now describe the prominent forms of spirituality that were present within the EDA movement.

4.3 Alternative Spiritualities

Alternative spiritualities is the term I will use to describe an essentially eclectic religious tradition which is frequently termed 'The New Age

³³ Although these political theories are diverse a unifying base could also be detected, Doherty has defined the common features as 'ecology, egalitarianism and participatory democracy' (Doherty, 2002, p. 77). As I will outline below in relation to spiritual traditions a 'core pagan doxa' was identified by Andy Letcher, it appears to me that the approaches to both politics and religion within the EDA movement are similar, indicating amongst other things a world view which values the pluralistic ethic.

³⁴ Plows asserts a similar defence see (2002, p. 132).

Movement'.³⁵ I have avoided this term as it can be overlaid with many different meanings, not least the specific association with a belief in the 'Age of Aquarius'. Furthermore the term has been used in a disparaging way which may in turn influence its accuracy. I therefore follow Bloch and Tomalin in using an alternative (Bloch, 1998a; Tomalin, 2009). Later in this study I will employ the term 'eclectic' or 'eclectics' to describe precisely the eclectic form of spirituality observed within environmental communities.

The origin of alternative spiritualities is commonly attributed to the 'cultic milieu', an older established tradition of alternative religious beliefs and practices (Kaplan & Löow, 2002, p. 2; Taylor, 2010, p. 77). The phrase 'cultic milieu' describes "sectors in Western societies in which socially deviant, countercultural knowledge - both spiritual and scientific/quasi- scientific - are brought together by their carriers and proponents, incubating, cross-fertilizing, reproducing, and spreading"(Taylor, 2010, p. 14).

The 1960s countercultural movements in the USA are also considered to have had a significant role in the development of alternative spiritualities (York, 1991, p. 45); the ideological diversity inherent within these movements being a key feature (Scott, 1990, pp. 15, 100). Alternative spiritualities, taken as a whole, are extremely diverse in beliefs and practices. What is more it is not unusual for a high level of diversity to be present within a person's spiritual practice. Jon Bloch summarises the eclectic nature of these traditions well.

"Hence, one might encounter in the same New Age or Neo-Pagan gathering someone who practices Zen meditation, does astrological

³⁵ Michael York defines the New Age movement as "an amorphous association of people who identify primarily as spiritual explorers. Many if not most feel that humanity is at the dawn of entering into a new form of consciousness. The new Age of Aquarius, unlike its Piscean predecessor, is to be a time for balance between male and female qualities, the elimination of aggression and power obsessions, and a civilization more in tune with the rhythms of nature and based on a more equitable development of human potential. New Age adherents or associates, inevitably characterized by various forms of spiritual syncretism, are seekers after what they believe to be truth and peace.... as a "religion of commodification," it parlays with any number of alternative medical or psychological methods ranging from meditation, acupuncture, homeopathy, aromatherapy, astrology, environmentalism, Hermetic practice, Esoteric Christianity and Goddess Worship." (Michael York in Taylor, 2005, p. 1193).

charts, and studies the Christian-based "Course in Miracles". Someone else might study the Jewish Kabbalistic tradition, Hindu-based yoga, and Wiccan spell-casting. Yet these individuals might consider themselves to be part of the same overriding spiritual "community" that is alleged to transcend any one group doctrine or affiliation." (Bloch, 1998a, p. 56).

The individual then may in fact practice a number of religious traditions concurrently. To varying degrees these beliefs and practices change, new spiritual traditions are adopted or integrated and old ones further adapted or abandoned. An important recognition within this dynamism is that the ultimate authority in the choosing resides within the individual person; within the inner self (Bloch, 1998a, p. 61; Possamai, 2000, p. 371). It has been recognised that this usually has an impact in that people adopting alternative spiritualities often prefer loose structural ties which can in turn put a strain on communal life (Bloch, 1998a, p. 59). It is in this respect that Jon Bloch adds an important proviso in the quote above, namely that most individuals who practice alternative spiritualities frequently relate to one another and consider there to be an underlying spiritual reality that links these diverse spiritual traditions. This underlying belief has been associated with modernism and monism (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 127). Even so practitioners are disinclined to stay in one organisation; they may well be part of many groups or move their group allegiances regularly (Possamai, 2000, p. 370). Some commentators have therefore claimed that these traits make it difficult to live in a small-scale community, especially long-term (Woodhead, 2002, p. 253). Paul Heelas has succinctly described this aversion and the resultant tension that it generates:

"The more that the New Age is detraditionalized or otherwise antiauthoritarian, the more likely it is that its participants take advantage of their freedom to lapse into 'trivialized and self-indulgent' versions of supposed Self-Spirituality, and the more difficult (it appears) is it to live the communal life." (Heelas, 1996, p. 214).

However, as will become apparent below, community members practicing alternative spiritualities did indeed remain long-term within the environmental communities studied, I will elaborate on these findings in Chapter 8.4.1.

The development of environmental social movements and alternative spiritualities are to some degree overlapping or intertwined (Heelas, 1996, p. 56; McKay, 1996, p. 54). Nevertheless the increasing prominence of the environmental theme has significantly influenced the direction of alternative

spiritualities. Consequently there has been a noticeable shift towards nature-centred spirituality. Sometimes this is equated with Modern Paganism or Neo-Paganism (Bloch, 1998c), but can this be considered a separate religious movement? As Ron Hutton has noted in the UK context, the development of Modern Paganism or Contemporary Paganism ³⁶ in relation to the alternative spiritualities stemming from the USA, is complex. British contemporary paganism arose in the 1950s with Gerald Gardner's reclaiming of past pagan, Wicca, traditions (Hutton, 2000, p. 124). Alternative spiritualities conversely emanated from USA in the 1970s. The 'former therefore cannot possibly be an aspect or outgrowth of the latter' he concluded; 'the latter had to some extent attempted to appropriate the former' (Hutton, 2000, p. 411). So although containing many overlapping characteristics these separate sources produced different features within the respective traditions, these features can be contrasted.

"Paganism in general is much more overtly religious and precisely defined than the New-age; it emphasizes natural cycles, whereas New-Agers emphasize karmic law and judgement.... They imply a hierarchy of planes with the spiritual one being superior... The New-Age Movement is based largely upon the quest for a common basis for world spirituality, while pagan witches tend to be instinctively pluralistic and to stress the distinct nature of their own religion and except it is likely only to suit a minority.³⁷ (Hutton, 2000, p. 412).

Even so, the intertwining of the two approaches or traditions makes for a complex phenomenon, which some academics have industriously tried to unravel (Albanese, 2007, p. 512; York, 1991, p. 12). Throughout the study I will consistently refer to alternative spiritualities as different traditions to contemporary paganism and Eco-Paganism.

³⁶ I will use the phrase contemporary paganism to avoid the term 'modern' being confused with modernity or modernism.

³⁷ The differences here in relation to pluralism or the pluralistic ethic are worth noting, those adopting alternative spiritualities may possess an underlying desire to homogenise, universalise, (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 127) whereas the contemporary pagans will readily accept diversity, seeing less need or no need to adapt in response to other traditions they are living alongside.

4.4 Contemporary Paganism

For many contemporary pagans the 'honouring of nature' rests at the heart of their spiritual tradition (Jamison, 2011, p. 109). Within this broad definition lie the subcategories of Wicca, Heathenry, Druidry and Shamanism (Taylor, 2005, p. xvii). But even within this more differentiated list lies a plethora of traditions, practices and beliefs. Ian Jamison has suggested that given this plurality one should perhaps not talk of Paganism, but of Paganisms (Also see Epstein, 1991, p. 171).

"What this amounts to is that really we should be talking about Paganisms - a plurality of different world-views and life-ways. These are not necessarily delimited by the 'normative' traditions of Paganism - different traditions of Wicca, Druidry or Shamanism, but more representative of individuals and small groups." (Jamison, 2011, p. 112).

The greater emphasis here upon diversity, the move away from traditions towards the group focus and individual focus would suggest movement towards a vernacular approach to religion (Letcher, 2001b, p. 148). Jamison has also developed another distinction, to delineate differences within the vast array of Pagan beliefs and practices. He has suggested a spectrum or continuum exists between Animist and Esoteric forms of Paganism.³⁸ Animist Paganism is describe as beliefs and emotions engendered by direct contact with nature This he contrasts with Esoteric Paganism which is further from nature, more constructed and symbolic than real and embodied.

"This Pagan view was not based in an esoteric understanding of nature, but instead was rooted in the encounter with nature experienced directly by those in the protest camps, living out in the field. This was often understood as a profoundly Pagan experience." (Jamison, 2011, p. 131).

Jamison's use of the terms 'Animist' and 'Animism' here requires some explanation as they do not equate with the classical meanings used within religious studies (Taylor, 2010, p. 6). It would perhaps be better to use the term 'Contemporary Animism' as defined by Graham Harvey (Harvey in

³⁸ See Harris for a more detailed discussion on this frequently referred to distinction, he prefers to use terms 'Earth-based and Esoteric Paganism' (Harris, 2008, p. 18 & 24).

Taylor, 2005, p. 81). His definition of the term is not restricted to supernatural notions and meta-empirical beliefs.

“The application of the term animism no longer depends on notions about “spirits” or “supernatural” entities. It has been found helpful in drawing attention to ontologies and epistemologies in which life is encountered in a wide community of persons only some of whom are human... It is also used as a self-definition by some indigenous people and some eco-pagans.” (Harvey in Taylor, 2005, p. 81).

This is an important distinction to make since the term now embraces both empirical and meta-empirical stances. For example those who believe in separate spirits, perhaps dwelling in another realm which is spiritual but no less present, and those who simply envisage that they exist in a wide community of beings, all of equal importance.

Jamison’s distinction then (Animist – Esoteric) will be useful in determining the different forms of contemporary paganism present within environmental communities.

I will now discuss the Eco-Pagan tradition which was formed during the EDA movement in the 1990s. This spiritual tradition can most definitely be located towards the animist end of the spectrum, (Jamison, 2011, p. 139; Taylor, 2005, p. 81).

4.5 Eco-Paganism

Eco-Paganism is a spiritual tradition shaped and defined in relation to the 1990s road protests in the UK. Andy Letcher defines it thus:-

“Eco-Paganism is used as a loose term for spiritualities within the British protest movement; it includes two broad groups. Firstly it refers to the practices of initiated members of existing pagan faiths who involve themselves in direct action... [and] sought to combine ritual/magical practice with direct action in what they termed “eco-magic.” ...[It] secondly refers to the “detraditionalized”, elective and affectual spiritualities of protesters living more permanently at protest camps. Loose and resisting tight categorization, these syncretic spiritualities incorporate belief and practice from Buddhism, Shamanism, the New Age, Theosophy, 60s psychedelia, the Rainbow movement, and British folklore, while retaining a core pagan doxa.” [brackets mine] (Letcher in Taylor, 2005, p. 556).

In a similar manner to how protest camps formed their own group norms and culture, they also developed their own unique nature-centred spirituality, Eco-Paganism. Letcher distinguishes two groupings within Eco-Paganism which appear to have different features, these mainly being determined by the previous experience of participants. Both were critical of esoteric, disembodied, symbolic Paganism, stressing the importance of nature-connection in its unadulterated form and both recognised the importance of defending nature direct action style. However the religious concepts which they drew upon and the rituals they practiced were different. The first grouping (type 1) appear to have been previously part of the contemporary pagan movement; however distinctly unlike the contemporary pagan movement they became intently political (Hutton, 2000, p. 405). Their rituals and ceremonies were more formal than the second grouping (type 2) and drew upon particular pre-Christian Indo-European religions traditions. The second grouping, type 2, was considered more amorphous and eclectic in relation to the spiritual notions which they drew upon, Letcher suggesting this type was more 'New Age'. He also refers to the traditionalised/detraditionalised distinction (Heelas, 1996, p. 214) which is often applied to alternative spiritualities and an anti-authoritarian instinct.³⁹ This detraditionalised grouping then, type 2, exhibited an amorphous and informal approach towards ceremony, emphasising the role of the group to construct their own rituals. I would certainly concur with this distinction and also note that the second grouping, type 2, appears to be closer to the direct action ethic and the social ecology political perspective; these being generally much more critical of past traditions, privileging the individual's right to determine belief and practice. Where I think Letcher's suggestion is problematic is in relation to the esoteric aspects within alternative or 'New Age' spiritualities. As outlined above both groupings could not in any sense be considered otherworldly or, world-denying in the Weberian sense (Heelas, 1996, p. 30). In this respect both groupings, type 1 & 2, remain critical towards the esoteric, otherworldly aspects of alternative spiritualities (Plows, 1998, p. 169).

There appears within Letcher's two group distinction something similar to the distinction between contemporary paganism and alternative spiritualities as

³⁹ Adrian Harris also notes the traditional/detraditional distinction within Eco-Paganism. In the traditional category he notes three sub variants: Reclaiming, Dragon and various Druid orders (Harris, 2008, p. 28).

comprehensively described by Hutton (2000, p. 411). Given that Letcher's emphasis is upon the different 'groupings' I would suggest that the distinction can be attributed to the sequence of events for each individual person or group. The first grouping, type 1, is most likely to have been part of the contemporary pagan movement before the road protests began; already practicing forms of contemporary paganism. Their journey therefore is from a spiritual tradition to political action.⁴⁰ Conversely the second grouping, type 2, were most likely to have practiced political direct action first and only later, in response to the intense experiences of nature connection on the protest camp⁴¹, explored Pagan spirituality. Their journey was therefore from political direct action and nature connection towards Pagan spirituality.⁴² Importantly however, for this second grouping, type 2, their experiences of nature connection and spiritual development were particularly related to the social group as they lived on the protest site (Harris, 2008, p. 226; Plows, 2002, p. 167).⁴³ Hence a distinct form of vernacular religion developed for this second grouping of Eco-Pagans (Letcher, 2001b, p. 148).

Also significant to the on-site, type 2, Eco-Pagan grouping was their dynamic and complex relationship with off-site Eco-Pagans, type 1. Living on-site and being ready to defend nature at a moment's notice was central to the protest camp strategy; furthermore, protesters usually became attached to the immediate natural surroundings of the camp (Merrick, 1997, pp. 90,92). Consequently, residency on site constituted a considerable commitment to

⁴⁰ Also relevant here is the fact that many road protest sites and quarry protest sites were close to ancient monuments. Some contemporary pagans were already visiting these sites before the protest camps were set up.

⁴¹ This 'nature connection effect' being furthered by the fact that many protesters were in most cases urbanites (Letcher, 2001a, p. 65). Harris also notes this and links it to Greenway's 'wilderness effect' (2008, p. 175).

⁴² In emphasising this development from political to spiritual, or vice versa, I am not suggesting that the former understandings were necessarily reduced in importance or left behind; nevertheless they may well have been enriched or reordered.

⁴³ This in many respects resembles what I will term later in Chapter 9.4.1 'organic embodied solidarity' the combination of body experiences in nature intermingled with social interaction.

the cause, resulting in an 'affectual solidarity' (Plows, 2002, p. 114; Zicklin, 1983, p. 69). Perhaps inevitably this on-site solidarity led to some tensions with visiting Pagans.⁴⁴ This quote from Roberts and Motherwort seems particularly relevant here.

"When visiting Wiccans invited the Eco-Pagan protesters living in Lyminge Forest to join their ritual, they were told: "We don't need your rituals. We live it every day." (Motherwort, 1997).

Within Letcher's definition then, type 1, Eco-Pagans were practicing contemporary pagans who were often part of initiated Pagan groups. They tended to visit protest sites for short periods of time to conduct 'eco-magic' ceremonies and rituals. Type 2 Eco-pagans in contrast, practiced detraditionalised forms of Paganism and were much more critical of power structures within formal religious traditions. They resided for long periods of time on EDA protest sites. This well-ordered distinction has however been complicated somewhat by Adrian Harris's research. By adopting the two major distinctions within Letcher's definition, traditionalised/detraditionalised and on-site Eco-Pagan/visiting Eco-Pagan, who he labels urban,⁴⁵ Harris formed a typology or spectrum on which he placed the Eco-Pagans he interviewed (2008, p. 126). By defining this spectrum he is able to apply a more nuanced approach which highlights that some site Eco-Pagans are in fact, in contradiction to Letcher's definition, traditional in their practice of Paganism and that conversely some urban (visiting) Eco-Pagans are relatively detraditionalised. Additionally it highlights that some Eco-Pagans split their time almost equally between protest sites and houses in urban contexts, blurring the geographical distinction. These findings appear to challenge assumed distinctions within Letcher's two groups definition. Nonetheless I consider Letcher's identification of two groups helpful. In

⁴⁴ My comments here are also supported by community members who discussed during interview their experiences relating to visiting Pagans and their approaches (Int 29 42:43). Also see tensions noted by Merrick (1997, p. 118).

⁴⁵ There is an general assumption by Harris here that Eco-Pagans live in urban areas, hence when not on the protest site they reside in the urban setting. That said he does acknowledge that some Eco-Pagans do not necessarily return to an urban context when moving back to a more conventional lifestyle (2008, p. 124). Also see Letcher's comments on protesters previously being 'urban dwellers' (2001a, p. 65).

Chapter 5 I identify the Eco-Pagan tradition as being present within the rural environmental communities that form part of the study. I will be generally associating the term with Letcher's second grouping, type 2, where a form of Eco-paganism correlates with type 1 I will explicitly state this. To a certain degree there is an inconsistency in using the term Eco-Paganism within environmental communities since the community members are no longer engaged in direct action. However, as many community members state, the formation of the environmental communities, especially in those contexts that challenge existing planning restrictions, are a form of direct political activism. Even so the less intense forms of political engagement may in fact be changing the character of Eco-Paganism for these community members. The implications of this change will be explored in the coming chapters.

Alex Plows has also commented on forms of pagan spirituality stemming from the EDA movement. She has a slightly different slant to Letcher and Harris. To begin with, she prefers to use the term 'practical paganism' (Plows, 2002, p. 166). What she describes has features not included within Andy Letcher's definition. For instance she talks of 'values', a 'Holistic ethic' and 'political realism' concepts usually acceptable to the 'consciously secular' protester.

"For many direct activists the value of nature and self can be described as a spirituality, literally an awareness of spirit, of life force. I need to stress that this is a very personal thing. Many in the movement will identify this sense of connectedness as something that motivates their actions, but would not describe it as spirituality, simply as a socially committed and environmentally aware attitude. Others do perceive this web of life as something sacred - nature and our relationship with it, the wonder of this chaotic diversity, is celebrated and danced to. Paganism perhaps, but as I have stressed elsewhere, practical paganism, first and foremost as an approach which has solid foundations in informing our attempts at radical change. Belief in 'earth energy' does *not* prohibit political realism. On the contrary, it is an added incentive." (Plows, 1998, p. 168).

"Solstice celebrations, drumming, dancing round standing stones, are all expressions of the 'holistic ethic' I am identifying (and my personal belief is, yes, I'm sure sympathetic magic works!)" (Plows, 1998, p. 170).

Plows seems to imply here that the phenomenon which gives rise to both environmental values and sense of spirituality is essentially the same,

namely experiencing connection with nature. She stresses that spiritual notions such as 'earth energies' do not in any way inhibit very real political goals; there is no conflict. I would like to note that Plows' stance here, reflected widely within the movement, opens the way for a unity that overcomes the religious- nonreligious, meta empirical-empirical divide. However I would still maintain that tensions exist in that explicit reference to beliefs surrounding the understanding of the experience of nature, or nature and political activism combined, are often avoided, kept 'very personal', kept within the 'personal sphere' (see Chapter 6.3.1). In this respect practical paganism is biased towards action rather than beliefs, more orthopraxic than orthodox (Bell, 1997; Szerszynski, 2002). In relation to Letcher's distinction it appears most similar to type 2 Eco-Paganism. Plows, elsewhere, makes reference to a continuum or spectrum. At one end of this continuum are 'consciously secular' protesters without spiritual beliefs and at the other a standard activist spirituality.

"There is a continuum here, with an ethical and/or emotional but consciously secular approach on one end to spirituality on the other. When articulated, there is a fairly 'standard' activist spirituality, which I have described elsewhere as 'practical paganism' " (Plows, 2002, p. 166).

It appears here that she is identifying stances in between the 'empirical' approach and 'meta-empirical' spirituality. The concept of a continuum facilitates more complex constructions of belief that do not fall neatly into the extremes; agnostic or differing levels of meta-empirical belief may be held as well as synchronised forms that rely equally upon spiritual and empirical understandings. What is evident, tensions notwithstanding, is that such distinctions are downplayed or 'transcend the dichotomy between the religious and the secular' (Tomalin, 2009, p. 108) for the sake of movement goals. This is not least because the solidarity evidenced within protest groups has to do with shared environmental ethics, cultural norms and a pluralistic approach. With the careful use of language and a tolerant attitude, differences can be overcome. Nevertheless some differences are not so easily overcome. Her criticism of 'New-Age' spirituality here indicates a clear demarcation.

"The values/ethics/spirituality which inform our political action cannot be categorised as a 'New Age' philosophy. You won't find many New Agers on protest camps for the simple reason that the New Age perspective is one of 'social change through individual change'. To be

frank I feel I have more in common with the security guards on site forced by social and economic pressure into taking crappy low-paid work many of them don't agree with, than twee hippies who believe that all the world's problems will be solved if we sit on the ground and go 'om' ." (Plows, 1998, p. 169).

The tensions here represent a real difference in strategic philosophies when working towards movement goals. I will explore the movement discourse surrounding this theme within Chapter 7 claiming that such differences are in reality more divisive than theoretical and ideological standpoints. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will refer to Plows' 'continuum' to identify forms of spirituality that are in fact somewhere on the continuum between 'spiritual' and 'consciously secular'. Here I am thinking of community members who are sceptical or resistant to spiritual beliefs (meta-empirical and supernatural) but who nonetheless attend solstice celebrations and even join in with informal Pagan ceremonies.⁴⁶ This will be particularly helpful in the urban context for as will be demonstrated below spirituality is often implicit and ambiguous.

4.6 Tribal Metaphor and Indigenous Peoples

I will now examine how some in the EDA movement borrowed spiritual traditions and symbols from indigenous peoples. I will begin with a quote by Andy Letcher relating to Eco-paganism – however, the prevalence of such tribal metaphors is much broader, encompassing other spiritual traditions such as core shamanism and Native American Spirituality.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Bron Taylor would categorise such stances as 'Naturalistic Animism', 'agnostic or sceptical of any immaterial dimension underlying nature' however at the same time displaying features that 'resemble religious characteristics' (Taylor, 2010, p. 15).

⁴⁷ I will throughout the study use the term 'indigenous peoples' or 'indigenous cultures' when referring to tribal communities that live close to nature and have significantly less interaction with industrial processes. What I am most interested in here are the symbols, patterns of living and religious understandings that are being drawn upon by movement participants and community members. Words such as 'appropriation' and 'borrowing' have become associated with an academic discourse which centres upon the accurate interpretation of these cultures and the ethical considerations required when borrowing (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 2000; Luke, 1997). When using such terms I make no academic

“Eco-Pagan spirituality is primarily shaped by two factors: by emotional and physical struggles of protesting, and by the needs of protesters to give expression to their feelings for the natural world, a world with which they regard themselves as allied. The first was expressed through a new tribalism, that is, the adoption of signifiers from indigenous peoples. Protesters would paint their faces, drum and chant before engaging security guards. They referred to themselves as the ‘tribe’ and their aesthetic was ‘tribedelic’, regarding themselves as ‘primitive’ as opposed to ‘progress’.” (Letcher, 2002, p. 85).

The fascination with indigenous peoples has a long tradition within environmental movements (Dickens, 1996, p. 158; Gaard, 1993, p. 308; Hay, 2002, p. 80; Tomalin, 2009, p. 111), and indeed can be traced further back in to the 1960s countercultural movements. (Melville, 1972, p. 146; Roszak, 1969, p. 140). Within the EDA movement there was a political awareness surrounding the plight of indigenous peoples, their ‘indigenous struggles’, their subjugation and displacement in the face of industrial development and resource extraction (Plows, 2002, p. 218; Taylor, 2010, p. 91). Its presence within the movement then should come as no surprise. But as ever there is the on-going discourse surrounding what is ‘authentic’, a true representation of the indigenous tradition and also the ethical considerations surrounding the appropriation of the indigenous tradition into another context (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 2000; Luke, 1997). What I would like pick up on here is the contestations surrounding authenticity as I will be expanding on the theme in Chapter 8. Indigenous peoples and their traditions are often examined by radical environmentalists and contemporary pagans in search of lost wisdom relating to human connection with nature (Jamison, 2011, p. 182; Lewis, 1992, p. 43; Tomalin, 2009, p. 88). There is however a tension in that many indigenous people retain very set social structures which often run counter to Western liberal values. For example, some indigenous peoples’ attitude towards women can be considered ‘savagely patriarchal’ and hierarchically structured (Plows, 1998, p. 168). These criticisms emanate from the political realm and often relate to liberal

criticisms in this regard. Also the term will be limited to present day cultures or those surviving during the 20th Century. When referring to past or ancient indigenous cultures I will use the term ‘Pre Christian Indo- European cultures’.

expressions that accentuate individual rights. These political aspects, coupled with the prominence of a pluralistic ethic, meant that EDA participants commonly adapt indigenous traditions to suit their personal or group purposes, removing any political and social constructs they find objectionable (Plows, 1998, p. 168). This had the effect of downplaying the authority of the tradition being borrowed upon and emphasising the importance of the group or tribe. In Chapter 8 I will describe how this process resembles vernacular religion and contrast it with other forms of religion present within environmental communities.

The development of a tribal metaphor may have been partly due to the affinity-group structure commonly employed within the EDA movement. This meant that small 'tribal' sized groups had already been established to achieve political goals. The 'Donga' tribe formed during the Twyford down protests was the first most notable example of the tribal identity (Tomalin, 2009, p. 112).

"This group [The Dongas] had a very strong self-identification with the land and this combined with a shared set of political/ethical discourses around indigenous peoples, threatened land and an opposition to 'development', meant that the name and idea of the 'Donga Tribe' was rapidly adopted. As "early risers" (Tarrow 1998) in the protest cycle, the Donga Tribe seeded the notion of 'tribal' identification with place - activists as indigenous protectors of their homeland, developing communal and eco-aware lifestyles - as an intrinsic aspect of what it meant to be a roads protestor." (Plows, 2002, p. 46).

The notion of being 'indigenous protectors of their homeland' led to a fascination and rediscovery of pre Christian Indo-European cultures. Those attempting a re-indigenising process within the UK considered this approach to be more 'authentic', one born through a relationship with the landscape (Jamison, 2011, pp. 109,188). In relation to religion, explorations were significantly influenced by existing contemporary pagan groups who were visiting the protest sites (Merrick, 1997, p. 53). Many of the tensions relating to the ethics of appropriating a culture, as mentioned earlier, were lessened within this approach. However, issues relating to authenticity were just as problematic. The search for authenticity in fact became dependent on upon archaeological evidence about pre-Christian Indo-European cultures. Frequently the archaeological evidence which was uncovered was ambiguous and could be interpreted in several different ways, these being

continually contested within academia (Hutton, 2000, p. 356). These often uncertain and tentative foundations offered a platform for more imaginative writers to fill in the gaps (Hutton, 2000, p. 283). Additional to this creative element, individuals and groups further interpreted and adapted the concepts for their own purposes. I will elaborate further on this theme in Chapter 8.

To complete this section I will comment upon the bonding aspects of the tribal metaphor since it relates to this study. The perception of being in a tribal group clearly engendered a bonding effect. Still, this came at an expense to the movement as a whole, as evident here in this carefully selected quote relating to the Donga tribe.

“Neo-Tribalists were often seen as obsessed with a politics of exclusive identity. ‘Clare’, discussing the Solsbury Hill campaign, argued: ‘We let them put all their dogma and all their kind of stuff on us too much.... They were somehow a lot wiser...[their] lifestyle was a lot more important than being there to stop the road, and we were all there for *that* reason. We didn’t get a lot of respect’.” (Wall, 1999, p. 164).

An increased emphasis on the small tribal group has the potential to result in ‘cliques’ (Plows, 2002, p. 43) or groups that are resistant to new members. This in turn reduces the amount of people engaged in political direct action and impacts the wider movement.⁴⁸ I will elaborate later on this discourse and the inherent social differences between mass social movements and smaller communal groupings.

⁴⁸ Plows also makes a similar observation “The more pressing problem for activists is the fact that these ‘localised’ identities can become extremely cliquey and alienate not just the general public but quite often other activists (Wall 1999; Plows 2001), to the point where others can be put off taking any further action. At certain points the ‘localised’/‘tribal’ identity – the group bond - comes to outweigh a wider sense of a movement collective identity. For example, during the Newbury campaign, activists who came to the site from other areas for short spaces of time (rather than living fulltime on site) were referred to as “weekenders”. This was extremely hurtful for people who were involved in other campaigns, or who had children, or who were working, but had still made the effort to take action at Newbury, and one can only hazard a guess as to how many simply didn’t bother to come the next time.” (Plows, 2002, p. 48).

The Eco-pagan focus on indigenous peoples and ancient societies also resulted in an increasing interest in the role of the Shaman.

4.7 Shamanism, Neo-Shamanism

Shamanic practice in varying forms can be detected within many expressions of contemporary paganism. However, in recent years many have begun to consider themselves to be on a specifically Shamanic path (Wallis, 2003, p. 32), hence the development of the terms Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism. The professor of anthropology turned practitioner, Michael Harner, is generally acknowledged as being among the most influential teacher in the Western context. He is credited with making Shamanic practice accessible: before he established the 'Harner method' any would be practitioner needed to seek out an indigenous shaman and become their apprentice. Furthermore, the apprenticeship would not be an easy one, it usually involved 'arduous physical and mental trials including the ingestion of potentially lethal entheogens'⁴⁹ (Wallis, 2003, p. 45). Having gone through this process himself he developed a teaching programme and published books so that everyone could benefit from the practice of Shamanism. This form of Shamanism is usually termed 'Core Shamanism' as its central teaching is drawn from similar 'core' shamanic practices all around the world. It focusses on the use of percussion instruments, drums or rattles, to help the student to enter an altered state of consciousness. When the student has entered this non ordinary world they are free to explore elements of nature via the shamanic journey (Harner, 1990). Unlike many indigenous shamanic practices Harner's method does not involve the ingestion of entheogens. The significance of the 'power animal' and 'vision quests' are also emphasised.

"In this state the shaman journeys into the lower or upper worlds in order to meet spiritual entities like power animals and spirit helpers. Submitting as an apprentice to the spirits, the shaman can then ask

⁴⁹ The term entheogens refers to substances taken to induce spiritual experiences or trancelike states (Taylor, 2005, p. 596). However the distinction between recreational drugs taken for personal relaxation or pleasure and entheogens taken for specific religious or spiritual purposes was not always clear-cut (see Chapter 5.3.8).

for help or advice in order to heal herself/himself, other people, animals, plants, or places.” (Taylor, 2005, p. 743).

As you might well expect, his syncretisation and adaptations of these indigenous practices has drawn significant criticism. Firstly, similar to the criticism I have described above, he is accused of decontextualizing and universalising traditions that are in essence indigenous, related to specific landscapes. Furthermore he is accused of imposing Western values and worldviews by psychologising and individualising (Wallis, 2003, p. 49). Robert Wallis has also documented the rise of new Shamanic practitioners who have added further criticisms to this list such as challenging the assertion that anyone can be a shaman. Shamanism for these new Shamanic practitioners is extremely arduous and painful involving the ingestion of powerful entheogens. Finally Wallis notes the presence of shamanic practices within the 1990s road protests.

“Neo-Shamanisms are too fragmented to be simply a movement, and only some Neo-Shamanic groups such as road protestors (e.g. Letcher 2001) readily lend themselves to Maffesoli’s (1996) post-modernising of the term ‘tribe’.” (Wallis, 2003, p. 29).

In this quote he is emphasising that most Neo-Shamans are lone practitioners and do not usually gather in social movement formation or small groupings. His reference here to Letcher appears erroneous since what I have been highlighting throughout is that EDA groups are not unified homogenous groups in relation to spiritual traditions. They are first and foremost orientated to movement goals. That said he is surely right in identifying Neo-Shamanic practice within the 1990s road protests.

I will now comment upon Social Ecology as it is often considered the dominant political theory within the EDA movement (Plows, 2002, p. 296) and, as I have explained above, I am interested in the interactions between political and religious ideologies.

4.8 Social Ecology

Social Ecology theorists maintain a ‘holistic’ ontology, one in which self, society, and nature can exist in harmony (Seel, Paterson, & Doherty, 2000, p. 98). According to this theory environmental destruction ensues when these entities are disrupted, this being predominantly generated by authoritarian, hierarchical and exploitative social institutions. The solution then is to be found in promoting social change by establishing sound

relationships between humanity and the natural world. Importantly though the correct patterns for this social harmony are to be found in nature itself. In this sense it is often termed a “natural” political philosophy (Eckersley, 1992, p. 146). In terms of political theory it is often considered to have considerable overlap with anarchism (Merchant, 1992, p. 142; Seel et al., 2000, p. 97) as well as emphasising communitarianism and decentralism (Taylor, 2005, p. 1569).

The author and political theorist Murray Bookchin has been particularly instrumental in the development of Social Ecology. A major contribution has been his ‘Social hierarchy’ thesis in which...

“Bookchin suggests that it is possible to chart the evolution of these hierarchies in the long transition from the organic societies of the preliterate Neolithic Period to the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean basin, disrupting the interdependent equilibrium of existing human and non-human ecosystems.” (Seel et al., 2000, p. 98).

This inclination to study past indigenous societies (he prefers the term ‘pre-literate societies’) has considerable overlap with deep ecology as commented upon in Chapter 2. However, important differences exist in relation to religion and spirituality within these two movements. These are perhaps best summarised by Bookchin’s contentious publication in *Green Perspectives* ‘Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A challenge for the Ecology Movement’ in which he sets out what he considered to be the differences

“Social ecology is neither deep, tall, fat, nor thick. It is social. It does not fall back on incantations, sutras, flow diagrams, or spiritual vagaries. It is avowedly rational. It does not try to regale metaphorical forms of spiritual mechanism and crude biologism with Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, or shamanistic Eco-la-la. It is a coherent form of naturalism that looks to evolution and the biosphere, not to deities in the sky or under the earth for quasi-religious and supernaturalistic explanations of natural and social phenomena.” (Bookchin, 1988).

The antagonistic tone of the publication came as a shock to many as Bookchin had previously expressed sympathy with various forms of spirituality (Taylor, 2005, p. 1569). Bookchin clears up any ambiguity in relation to the spiritual beliefs held by many deep ecologists. He states that Social Ecology is above all rational, based on material aspects of nature

which are constantly changing, this being consistent with the theory of evolution. Elsewhere in the article he confirms a reliance on scientific epistemologies, understandings founded upon atoms, molecules, amino acids, proteins, genetic codes etc.. (1988, p. 19). He affirms in no uncertain manner the secular/religious divide, the empirical and meta empirical, naturalism and supernaturalism. In keeping with other political theories he criticises the way religious and spiritual beliefs distract believers from the critical issues of discrimination and domination which are usually based on class, race and gender. Specialised roles within religion, such as priest or priestess, are considered exploitative in that they are essentially about securing privilege for the few (1988, p. 7; Letcher, 2001a, p. 56).

Although Bookchin relies heavily upon epistemologies based on science this does not result in a downplaying or separation from nature. In fact 'he suggested that animistic imagination offered modern society an outlook that is not only complementary to that of science but also more "organic" than the latter, and looked forward to a "new animism" based on a respect for and symbiotic relationship with other living beings' (Taylor, 2005, p. 1569). Nevertheless, his version of animism remained symbolic and imaginary; there is no hint of otherworldliness or supernaturalism. If Alex Plows' claims are correct, that a major strand of EDA activist identity is associated with social ecology,⁵⁰ then this discourse provoked by Bookchin must surely have challenged the pluralistic ethic and tolerance surrounding spiritual belief within the EDA movement (Wall, 1999, p. 165 for example). If Bookchin's stance was reflected by other movement activists it could be concluded that the religious-secular divide had not in fact been transcended (Tomalin, 2009, p. 108) but instead subsumed or downplayed as a pragmatic compromise to achieve movement goals. This would make sense of matters spiritual becoming a 'very personal thing' (Plows, 1998, p. 168), kept within the personal realm. Aspects of this discourse and the methods used to reduce its negative effects at the movement level will be referred to below as I seek to explain why spirituality is constrained within urban environmental communities in this study.

⁵⁰ Plows notes "To summarise, UK EDA movement collective identity is based around a social ecology perspective, grassroots democracy, social justice and environmental sustainability are commonly held nodes." (Plows, 2002, p. 295).

4.9 Conclusions

I have summarised the motivating ideology and culture of the EDA movement. I have focussed in particular upon the 1990s road protests as their protest camp tactic inspired many rural environmental communities. A pragmatic direct action approach was found to be dominant in respect to the movement's aims. Considerable emphasis was also placed upon developing a distinct alternative culture that constructed normative practices, green cultural codes and scripts. An alternative aesthetic and other symbols were also employed to define a collective identity, in many instances conceived as tribal. I then described in detail the major religious, spiritual and political traditions that were prevalent within the movement. It was established that the EDA movement was heterogeneous in relation to ideology with many political and religious ideologies co-existing peacefully. I therefore surmised that a pluralistic ethic was perceptible within the movement, this an overarching feature that will be regularly commented upon below. I speculated that all this was made possible by the movement's pragmatic aims (direct action) and the predisposition towards culture and lifestyle. Even so it could not be said that political theories and spiritual practices were insignificant to the movement or individuals. Movement discourses surrounding ideology were identified and these appeared to match the fault lines of the religious/secular divide, or more accurately the divide between meta-empirical and empirical, deep ecology and social ecology respectively. Rather than accepting this apparently clear divide I suggested that a more complex and nuanced approach may be achieved by employing Alex Plows' concept of a 'continuum'. This concept can embrace differing levels of belief and synchronised stances across the religious/secular distinction. In Chapters 5, 6 & 9, I broaden the analysis of this particular divide to include the context of environmental communities. Another movement discourse was found to centre on strategic philosophy, with differences based not on movement aims or ideology but on the most appropriate methods and tactics used to achieve, in most cases similar, movement goals. The differences I have identified above will contribute to Chapter 7 where I examine the occurrence in detail. Having reviewed the EDA movement within the UK, I will now proceed to examine the three environmental communities that form a major part of this study.

~ Chapter 5 ~ Environmental Community: Rural Context

5.1 Introduction

In the next two chapters I will describe the geographical setting and social life of three environmental communities, two rural and one urban. My intention is to comment on day-to-day interactions, thereby recounting a concise picture of community life which will in turn augment the following analytical chapters. Observations have been grouped under aspects of community life and recognised areas of sociological interest. Towards the end of each chapter I will focus specifically on communal and individual spiritual practices which will include some members' attitudes towards religion and spirituality. This will therefore encompass the views of those self-defining as non-religious and non-spiritual. Due to the inherent differences between urban and rural context I have decided to separate them, firstly describing the two rural communities (Chapter 5), then the single urban community (Chapter 6).

5.2 Method

I will be using qualitative methods to comprehend the complex social relationships within the communities. In general I have employed a comparative approach, comparing urban and rural contexts; but I will also go beyond these categories to discuss the differences between the spiritual traditions present. The primary source used for this analysis is thirty, in-depth, semi structured interviews. The shortest of these interviews was thirty minutes and the longest two and a half hours. They were broadly arranged around the following themes: journey into environmental movements, journey into community, community identity and cohesion, personal spiritual or religious traditions, role of religion and spirituality within the community, community rituals and parental influences. A degree of triangulation was ensured by an additional five interviews with members of other environmental communities in the UK. Whilst conducting these interviews I participated in community life as a temporary worker for five weeks in total, making field notes which I specifically refer to in the analysis below. For some community members religious beliefs were described as being very personal. Furthermore, as will become apparent below, noticeable tensions around religion and spirituality existed. To protect community members who

wished that their spiritual beliefs remain private, and to encourage community members who may have been reticent due to the tensions, I organised a degree of anonymity. The names of the interviewees and the organisational names for the communities have therefore been changed. Aside from the practical benefits for the study of this approach, it also avoided any factual information entering the public domain which may inadvertently damage the prospects of the communities studied. In this respect the frequent adversarial battles around planning permission with the local planning authorities were at the forefront of my thinking. I therefore follow Harris and others (Harris, 2008, p. 176; Melville, 1972; Zablocki, 1971) in adopting this method to safeguard as far as it is possible those taking part in the research. I acknowledge at the same time this method is not infallible; members of the communities studied will inevitably be able to identify their community but hopefully not the members being quoted.

5.3 Raven Hill and Yosemite

5.3.1 Architecture

Raven Hill and Yosemite are unusual among environmental communities as a whole in that their architectural structures are intentionally designed to be 'low-impact'. As outlined in Chapter 3, living in such structures has a substantial impact on the community members' everyday life. The interaction with the organic environment in such 'low-impact' type structures is significantly increased. This daily reality is often sought by the members even during the seasons when it can be very physically challenging. Community members are therefore actively seeking out direct connection with the natural environment. The following quote is typical of this conscious choice.

Sid "Still that feeling of being outdoors and er something for me that was really important when I wake up in the morning as soon as I pulled my clothes on, I go straight outside.... Even if you have to go to the toilet you are straight outside and your breakfast is outside, that feels so completely more natural than er when you go into a bricks-and-mortar house..... and you have your breakfast inside and you faff around inside getting ready to go out and finally at some point you go out into the world." **Int 15 14:30**

This feature of rural 'low-impact' development is, as I will outline below, significant to what members term 'nature-connection' as discussed in the

previous chapter; this in turn inculcates a particular form of spirituality which I will also discuss.

Raven Hill and Yosemite have a central communal area and communal structures made from bent-over branches and tarpaulins. The communal area and structures are essential to the everyday life of the community; it is the place where members meet daily, sharing stories and sharing resources. The main central structure accommodates a communal kitchen and a meeting space or lounge. In addition to this central structure the communal area also contains a shower room, laundry and compost toilets, which also serve as locations of communal interaction. Each community member then has their own personal or family area and structure set some distance away from the communal structures. It is usual for the members to build or rebuild their own low-impact structures which are similar in construction to the central communal structures but smaller in scale. This hands-on approach results in the construction of extremely personalised structures; form usually follows function with the members designing the layout to suit their particular lifestyle or aesthetic. These structures serve as sleeping space, personal lounge areas and often include a small kitchen.

Many members of the Yosemite and Raven Hill communities state that the experiences of the 1990s road protests introduced them to a 'low-impact' way of life which significantly changed their interaction with the natural environment.

Neo "It was really empowering [building your own shelter] also out on land, so it was like, who, I'm living outdoors now, you know, which was just beautiful er, the other thing was that it was the first experience of living on the land outdoors with people and working together for a common cause and that was just, I mean we were all finding that really really empowering and exciting and I think that's what kind of what kept us there you know..... I suppose our relationship with the natural world will have deepened as well. Because before that pretty much all of us other than [Sabrina] who was born in the woods and [Ozi] who was with her, we would have all been indoors in, you know, structures that would have isolated us from the outside world and even with sound, you know, like double glazing and stuff we probably wouldn't have even been hearing many of the sounds that were outside so this was the complete flip opposite and we were all really thriving from that." **Int 8 9:30** [brackets mine]

When the 1990s road protest camps achieved one of their major objectives, namely the scrapping of the government road expansion plans in 1997⁵¹, the movement gradually declined. However, those like Neo who had discovered an alternative way of life went on to join communities like Yosemite and Raven Hill who had adjusted their campaigns to focus on access to the land.

In respect to the number of members, Raven Hill and Yosemite are typical of this type of 'low-impact' environmental community. Often this is restricted by the geographical extent of the site (35 and 45 acres respectively), given that the ecological goal is to live sustainably or as is increasingly the case planning restrictions. The number of adult members at Raven Hill is twelve, this level of occupancy is considered to be at the maximum by both members and planning authorities. Adults range from 27 to 46 years of age. Five families have eight children between them ranging in age from 1 to 15 years; there are no single parents at Raven Hill. Adult members at Yosemite are presently ten, with two more members about to join, once this has taken place Yosemite will be considered fully occupied in regard to planning. Adults range from 30 to 50 years of age. Four families have six children ranging in age from 1 to 12 years; there is one single parent family at Yosemite. There seemed little if any enthusiasm for expanding numerically; however, inspiring others to duplicate the sustainable model is commonly verbalised (Int 4 28:10).

5.3.2 Local Towns and Economy, Work Arrangements

Although both Raven Hill and Yosemite are relatively isolated in rural contexts they are within commuting distance of towns associated with the cultic milieu (Kaplan & Löow, 2002, p. 2) or environmental milieu (Taylor, 2010, p. 14) towns such as Glastonbury, Totnes and Stroud. The diverse forms of religion and spirituality prevalent in such towns are clearly germane to the study and indeed were suggested in interview as being very similar in type and mix to that present within Yosemite (Int 24 1:00). The influence of these 'alternative spiritualities' (Bloch, 1998a) will be dealt with in depth during the second part of this chapter, but I list here the specific forms present in the local towns: Neo-Paganism, Zen meditation, Astrological

⁵¹ UK parliament publications, see References for Websites below.

readings, Kabbalistic traditions, Wiccan traditions, Hindu based Yoga, Native American Spirituality, Mahayana Buddhism, Reiki healing. Also present are esoteric methods of enquiry into paranormal phenomenon and parapsychology.⁵² Members of the community frequently socialise and become active in political, religious and ecological collectives within these towns. In addition, individuals from these town based collectives visit the community site regularly and interact with the members present. Members of both Raven Hill and Yosemite commonly take up employment within these local town centres, adding to their personal financial income. Typically the range of employment spans: personal care of the elderly or disabled, young people's education, environmental projects such as recycling schemes, environmental awareness, bicycle projects, conservation projects and tree surgery. Large-scale corporations are usually eschewed. This type of employment tends not to lead to a progressive career model and members typically limit their hours to just enough to get by financially. This particular aspect was also noted in the 1970s communes movement by Andrew Rigby (1974a, p. 215). Other streams of income stem from running 'Permaculture' and 'Nature Connection' courses on-site or at other local sites and seasonal work such as childcare or rigging at summer festivals.

Differences exist between Raven Hill and Yosemite in respect of the income from the land occupied. At Raven Hill minimal income is raised from working the land, since work on the land is primarily to provide for personal needs (food and fuel). This can be contrasted with Yosemite where the community as a whole are generating income (shared equally) from working the land and community members therefore are not expected to be employed more than two working days per week away from the community site. Communal workdays are periodically arranged at both Yosemite and Raven Hill to complete tasks that will benefit everyone. This type of work may include gathering wood that will be used for communal heating and cooking, building or refurbishing communal structures, emptying the compost toilets etc. All the members of the community are expected to work together on the communal work day and the visible presence of all the members working together on one task or on different tasks in the same locality forms a sense of common purpose and community (Int 16 17:17). However it was clear

⁵² This list has been compiled from my observations within the relevant towns and from the groups and activities mentioned during the interviews.

during the interviews that while some members considered this essential for community formation, others were not so sure (Int 6 105:00).

5.3.3 Meetings and Legal Structures

Both Raven Hill and Yosemite are not-for-profit autonomous cooperative associations, which is broadly representative of other environmental communities in the UK. The land is therefore controlled and managed by the members as a collective. Both communities have adopted a consensus decision-making process,⁵³ whereby if any single member does not approve of the proposal put forward they can (on their own) block the proposal.

At Raven Hill meetings are divided into 'business' and 'emotions'. The pattern was adopted by the founders on the advice of other existing communities which they consulted before moving onto site. The 'business' meeting is centrally concerned about the day-to-day tasks essential to the smooth and efficient operation of the community, this taking place every two weeks and usually taking up a full day. The midday meal then frequently becomes an improvised communal meal or occasionally a bring-and-share affair. The 'emotions' meeting, also scheduled every two weeks (on alternative weeks), are essentially concerned about the emotional life of the community. A talking stick⁵⁴ is passed around and each member encouraged to express their emotions and feelings without interruption. It was explained to me that this meeting was a place where emotional resentments could be aired with time to talk through their effect without interruption. My participation in these meetings was very stimulating and I was encouraged to share my emotions in just the same manner as other members of the community. At both the business and emotions meeting a concerted effort was made to voice and acknowledge what members appreciated and were thankful for. Usually this was a time for members to say thank you to other members but also frequent were thanksgivings to

⁵³ For information on consensus decision-making see References for Websites 'Seeds for Change' below.

⁵⁴ The talking stick, a stick or other significant object, is used as a device to enable the person holding the stick or other object to speak without being interrupted by other people in the meeting. It usually associated with Native American cultures. See References for Websites Re Enchant Planet Earth below.

nature, mother nature, creation, the landscape or particular animals, insects and elements. It was recognised by members that a strict division of business and emotions was not really workable and that at both meetings there may arise a need to talk more generally to unlock or understand situations. In addition to these meetings the women of Raven Hill also met together although with no apparent schedule. For obvious reasons I was not able to take part in these gatherings. However from what was discussed outside the group I deduced that time was spent together by the women without a structured agenda. Commonly a practical task, one which could be conducted whilst sitting in a circle, offered an informal setting. I suspect that both business and emotions were discussed and that the cohesion of the community was furthered by such meetings.

At Yosemite the pattern of meeting was very different to Raven Hill but the division of business and emotions was similar. A business meeting typically took place once or occasionally twice a week. This usually took the best part of the morning and was in essence very similar to Raven Hill. Yosemite have adopted what is termed 'the way of council' to deal with the emotional life of the community. This structure I will discuss in detail below as it can be considered to have a spiritual dimension (Zimmerman & Coyle, 1996, p. 5) with some members describing it as the "spiritual heart space of the community" (Int 24 2:00). The council is called every six weeks for a full day's meeting and like Raven Hill community adopts the talking stick technique. Although I was not able to participate in 'the way of council' meeting it was explained by members that the council offered a setting for members to express their emotional feelings. What I was able to observe was the atmosphere before the council meeting began when members were energetic, conversational, some carrying animal skins to sit on which all built into a sense of occasion. In addition to these regular meetings a full week of council, which was overseen by an external facilitator, was organised each year. This was described as being an opportunity to do 'personal work on yourself' (Int 23 1:50) which was understood as emotional and for some members spiritual. It can be noted that Yosemite members appear to spend a greater amount of time in their meetings both business and emotions (way of council) than Raven Hill. I would conclude that this is a conscious choice in that an implicit goal exists within the community for personal development through community interaction. This is generally understood as positive for the functioning of communal life (Int 23 2:00). The consensus decision-making process mentioned above can at times lead to difficult impasses however over the longer term these are usually resolved by members

compromising and becoming reconciled. In rare instances resolution is achieved by one or more members leaving the community, concluding that insufficient affinity exists between them. In the triangulation interviews I was informed of one community in which deep-seated personal resentments had built up over time. This was then accepted as irresolvable and the members concluded that they should all leave and let the land be taken over by a new collective. This is what eventually happened - however at the time of the interview the new community had not yet been fully formed (Int 36 7:39). Conflict around decision-making is not always damaging to social cohesion. Increased communication, compromise and reconciliation can be a very enriching processes where members learn much about themselves and other members of the community (Jackson, 1999). These everyday interactions build strong bonding social ties. In this respect, all the environmental communities that I have studied and visited (ten communities in all) have this 'Gemeinschaft' quality, where face to face contact and emotional expression are central. The distinction between community, Gemeinschaft, and society, Gesellschaft, is something discussed in Chapter 3.

5.3.4 Family Structures, Children, Schooling

In comparison with the 1970s communes movement, the family structures at Raven Hill and Yosemite were remarkably stable and traditional. Partners (male and female) rear their children and occasionally children from previous relationships. Although primary care was received from the parents, there was also considerable interaction via childcare and informal education from the other community members. Fathers appeared to play a greater role in the childcare of their children when compared to the average working family within the UK. This was facilitated by the flexible work patterns possible within environmental communities. The children themselves frequently formed ad hoc groups and played together for hours on end in the natural environment. Coupled with the rural location this offers an incredible freedom, especially for the older children when compared to children living within an urban environment. As mentioned in the statistics above only one family (at Yosemite) was a single-parent family. Older children also spent time watching children's programmes and playing computer games usually on laptop computers. The pattern of spending time directly within nature and then interacting with computer technology and the Internet (usually of an evening) seemed to synchronise with their parents' behaviour.

At both Raven Hill and Yosemite there were differences in relation to schooling. Within both communities members home-educated their children, citing concerns about how they would assimilate with children living in a very different environment and social structure. Other community members seemed content to access the local education system, seemingly without any major issues. Nonetheless, there was one instance where an older schoolboy was having issues with the school discipline regime. These seemed to revolve around the teachers' reluctance to explain the logic and reasoning for some of the school rules, a request that did not seem unreasonable in the view of the parents. The interaction with the local education system inevitably results in increased contact with the local population through the relationships built up by the children at school or parents at the school gate. At both Raven Hill and Yosemite children socialised with their school friends but usually away from the community site, as community members who were parents were concerned about how the other children would perceive the very different way of living that is low-impact community. Throughout the interviews it became clear that a number of community members had had turbulent relationships with their own parents. In some cases all family ties had been broken. This tendency can also be identified within the 1970s communes movement in the UK and the USA (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 190; Rigby, 1974a, p. 33; Speck, 1972, p. 26). Maffesoli has theorised that within modern Western society intimate social community is increasingly centred on the nuclear and extended family. Where such family structures have broken down the feeling of anomie and alienation is unbearable hence the need to belong to a neo-tribe (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 94) or a new family (Jerome, 1975; Speck, 1972). Halfacree has in turn applied Maffesoli's concept to protest communities and low-impact environmental communities (Halfacree, 1998, 1999). Such estrangement and family tensions could be interpreted as support for Maffesoli's theory whereby community members effectively moved, gradually or abruptly, to a new tribe, a new family, a social structure that was more meaningful and emotionally supportive (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 94).

5.3.5 Socio Economic Groupings, Ethnicity, Education and Mobility

In general the socio economic groupings within the rural communities studied reflected the social movement from which it grew (Plows, 2002, p. 49). Most community members came from the middle classes with a few

members making their way into the movement from the working class.⁵⁵ There was no discernible difference in this numerically between Raven Hill and Yosemite and I detected no particular prejudice between community members along class lines. That said there was occasional reference within the interviews to 'middle-class hippies' (Int 6 55:00), this being used as a derogatory term in connection to spirituality and in particular a self-centred attitude. It could also be discerned that the working class were in general less spiritually focused, though given the numbers involved this observation should carry little weight. Also, some middle-class community members were aware of their privileged upbringing and acknowledged an awareness of how this in turn influenced their worldview. These aspects appeared similar to the phenomenon of post-materialism in the Western context more generally (Doherty, 2002, p. 71; Inglehart, 1977; Kriesi, 1995, p. xx; Rigby, 1974a, p. 189).

Ethnicity within the rural context approximately reflected that of the EDA movement.⁵⁶ Most community members at both Raven Hill and Yosemite emanated from European ethnic groups describing themselves as white or Caucasian; the exception was one community member who identified as Jewish. In this respect, ethnic and cultural diversity was limited, posing no particular challenges to daily life. Four community members defined their ethnicity as Celtic, perhaps indicating an association with Celtic forms of paganism (Bowman, 1993).

Almost all community members in the rural context had gone to university or dropped out of a university course to join the 1990s road protests. Of the members who did not experience university life, it will be fair to say, most were from a working-class background. It could be said that within the two rural communities the level of education and general knowledge of life was extremely high. This was due in part to the experiences of travelling abroad on gap years which most members had undertaken. The experiences of travelling came up frequently within the interviews, usually being quoted as

⁵⁵ These broad class distinctions were arrived at by assessing the further education of those interviewed along with their parents economic situation. Since this information came informally during the interview process comments here should be considered approximate.

⁵⁶ See articles by Judy Ling Wong on the Black Environment Network (BEN) and *Do or Die* Volume 10 page(s) 236-242 See References for Websites below.

another context with which to compare and reflect on the UK and Western society.

5.3.6 Food

Both Raven Hill and Yosemite have weekly communal meals which contribute to a *Gemeinschaft* community feel. In the beginning both communities proposed a strictly vegan diet and vegan food only kitchens. In the case of Raven Hill the whole site was declared vegan food only; a state of affairs which lasted for the first five years. This then changed to vegetarian and eventually to the present situation where members are free to cook fish and meat in their personal living space. Communal areas remain vegetarian food only. The changes in the regulations around food coincided with an influx of new members. I would conclude that the restrictions around daily diet were deterring potential members who were interested in joining the community. In this respect some of the existing members loosened their strict stance and the new members, once accepted, pushed for further freedoms regarding food. Although fish and meat are now eaten within the personal spaces at Raven Hill there still exists a strong ethic around the treatment of animals and a real desire to be connected and concerned about the husbandry of the fish, birds and animals which are consumed. These changes relating to daily diet on-site have resulted in a diversity of positions for individual members which are causing some tensions at Raven Hill (field notes autumn 2011). What was a central root identity for the founder members has now diminished and at times issues around food appear problematic. Communal meals have now become visible signs of this diversity. What seems to result at communal meals is that members live with the tension, occasionally vocalising their particular stance on food or members adopt a pluralistic ethic embracing the difference.

Yosemite also began with some of the founders hoping to form a vegan only community; however the practicalities of not attracting enough members to establish a community in their own right meant that two affinity-groups merged and this ideal was compromised before moving onto the site. Similarly at Raven Hill, a diverse range of stances on food now exists. This ranges from: 'I eat what I like' (Int 21 1:19), to strict veganism, to vegetarianism and occasional meat-eating at celebrations. Also similar to Raven Hill there is a great deal of concern shown for the welfare of the animals and birds which are eaten.

I also observed in both Raven Hill and Yosemite tensions surrounding the food that children requested to consume. Frequently the young children asked to eat a particular food that was laid out for sharing on the communal table. However some parents restricted their children from eating certain foods for either health reasons or their personal stances on food as described above. This situation usually necessitated a conversation with the child in the social setting; this was potentially problematic as it required the parents to define in stark terms why they did not consider the food suitable.

Gathering wild foods and growing food for consumption are daily activities for rural members and considered a central focus. The majority of community members possess or are eager to gain an encyclopaedic knowledge of plants and their uses. I had the privilege of watching Sabrina collect a salad for our lunch from the surrounding area with such ease, most of which was growing wild (field notes Raven Hill Autumn 2011). This close connection in time and space between harvesting and eating coupled with knowledge of where the food is growing can be contrast with the average UK citizen who shops at a supermarket. In this instance there is no personal experience of growing or harvesting and little knowledge of the exact environment where the food is grown. This close relationship is clearly appreciated by the members and considerable time and energy is expended on increasing the availability of such food in the surrounding area (Int 19 30:50). Nonetheless tensions around food growing do exist, in that some members believe everyone in the community should be actively involved in food growing and demonstrating high level of self-sufficiency (Int 19 1:31:00) and others deeming such a goal as unobtainable (Int 17 49:20). In recent years at Raven Hill the hunting of wild animals and birds with airguns and shotguns has been introduced by some members. It appears that this type of hunting is a fusion between a means of providing meat for consumption and recreational sport. Although not openly verbalised, I did detect that some community members were not altogether comfortable with this development (field notes Raven Hill autumn 2011). Using the medicinal properties of plants is preferred to modern pharmaceutical medicine. Community members at Raven Hill and Yosemite frequently consulted with those within the community that specialised in herbal remedies. This was the first port of call when someone was not feeling well; I never heard or overheard in the communal areas any conversations relating to accessing a local GP doctor. The communal library at Raven Hill contained many books on herbalism, plant extracts and their uses.

5.3.7 Political Ideologies

Given the overlap with religious concepts and the historical role that political ideology has played within the communal movements generally (Hardy, 1979), I asked the community members about their political beliefs. The most frequent response I received was indifference, with community members describing themselves as non-political or self-governing. Interestingly, few members associated political ideology with environmentalism. Anarchism and notions of green anarchism were mentioned; this should not have come as a surprise given its pervasive influence in the EDA movement (see Chapter 4.8). The consensus decision-making process discussed earlier would be one practical expression of this anarchist ideology (Gordon, 2008, p. 35). Both notions here then, the apolitical and anarchist tendency, correlate quite closely with what David Pepper discovered in the early 1990s within green communities (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 103 & 107). The only other political ideologies that were mentioned related to socialist, 'lefty' leanings, again recognised in Pepper's study albeit in greater proportions (1991, p. 101). Generally speaking even when political ideology was directly addressed it did not seem particularly important to the community members in the rural context. This could in part be due to the dominance of Eco-Paganism and other alternative spiritualities. A feature similar to this has been recognised by Doherty in 'spiritually influenced campaigns based at rural sites' when compared with 'those in urban areas which had a stronger social and anarchist influence', a factor I will discuss in Chapter 7 (Doherty, 2002, p. 167). Also as will become apparent in Chapter 9, environmental communities generally place an importance upon their normative practices, how they live day-to-day on the land, hence the ideological components are downplayed. Community members were therefore likely to have been expressing that explicit political notions were not primary, however as I will outline later that does not necessarily mean they were not present and active.

5.3.8 Party Celebrations, Recreational Drugs and Entheogens

Anniversary celebrations also contribute to communal bonding. At Raven Hill there is a large yearly party to celebrate the establishment of the community. Wider networks of friends and family are invited making quite a big party gathering of around 50 to 70. Amplified recorded music in keeping with the

social movement's subculture is played, Dub, Roots and Folk; occasionally live music will be performed. Dancing, alcohol and recreational drugs are also prevalent, which will be discussed in more detail below. It is not unusual for a special sweat lodge or hot tub to be set up for the benefit of everyone at the party.⁵⁷ Perhaps more interesting are the smaller impromptu gatherings that take place regularly. This may be because a group of WWOOFers⁵⁸ are completing their time at the community or a couple of friends drop by and end up staying over. These smaller gatherings are usually made up of the majority of community members plus a few others who are visiting or WWOOFing. Live music is more common at these settings; sometimes informal storytelling takes place as well as whole group discussions. I have been present when community tensions are discussed at these gatherings in an informal way: recreational drugs coupled with a relaxed social setting seems to help community members gain deeper understandings and new perspectives surrounding the problems that they face. The timing of such gatherings can be quite ad hoc, even disruptive to important communal work. Some members prefer to carry on with the task at hand and party later, whereas others are happy to seize the moment and relax with friends - they surmise that work tasks will still be there tomorrow whereas the visiting friends may not!

Commonly linked with a celebration or party is the use of recreational drugs. I did not envisage drug experiences being a major focus during the interviews. However in discussing the journey into environmentalism and community it was frequently referred to by the interviewees and indeed is a continuing but not dominant feature at both rural communities. Here Theo talks about his early drug experiences whilst travelling in South America.

Theo: "To be quite honest smoking a lot of marijuana and erm, that was an opening up for me, you know it was a connection to a deeper place within me, deeper understanding of who I am and where I fit into the universe. Not only marijuana but LSD, You know my sense very much with drugs having been through that experience is that they do open up doors of perception particularly those more sort of psychotropic drugs but it's in an unsustainable way [laughs] at least

⁵⁷ Sweat lodges were also noted by Maxey at Brithdir Mawr (2002, p. 228).

⁵⁸ World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (see Chapter 3.4.4)

this is my journey with drugs that I feel they show you possibilities but then you got to find your own way back there without the drug, you know and of course the dependency might come in when you feel you need the drug or whatever.” **Int 5 7:49**

Theo’s pinpointing of the purposeful side of taking psychotropic drugs was echoed in many of the interviews chiming with the counter cultural movements of the 1960s. This dominant theme continued within the communes movement that formed during that period and into the 1970s both in the USA and UK (Rigby, 1974a; Speck, 1972). Benjamin Zablocki discussing the US context believes that such drug use in some cases triggered the establishment of communes, he distinguishes two types.

“There are two major ways in which drug use triggered the development of communes. One was through the institution of the *crash pad*. The other was through the fostering of the psychological experience of *communion*. Crash pads were simply dwelling units, usually urban occasionally rural, in which a varying number of people live and cooperate in obtaining the necessities of life... In some cases, whole crash pads have actually made the transition to become true communes. In other cases, subgroups of crash pad populations have ‘discovered their tribe’ and gone on to found communes. But in the majority of the relevant cases, it has simply been that the crash pad living has whetted an individual’s desire for something deeper, and started him out on a search which eventually led him to a life in a commune.”(Zablocki, 1971, p. 300).

Although drug use has not necessarily played such a central role in the formations of the communities that I have studied it has nonetheless been highlighted as a significant part in the life history of the community members and there may be some evidence that this shared history bonded the early community members together. In this next quotation from Sabrina she emphasises the feeling of group bonding when a whole group is experiencing the same drug.

Sabrina: “There was one time which I don't talk about much but we picked up some ecstasy tablets, me and [partner] actually, were in [southern county] and we brought them back there with ten people on the site at the time, it was Samhain, so we had ten tablets and we gave everyone an ecstasy tablet because that's what we do and it was like a really really intense group thing, I've never experienced anything quite like that before or since, it was something about all

being on the same drug and we went for a walk, I went for a walk, and they all followed me, and I remember somebody shouting follow the witch, we just went to this rock wall that was sort of at the back of the site, you're connected in this incredible way, erm I don't know though something about that, the next day we were a complete mess, it was horrible." **Int 14 30:00**

Also very prevalent within the interviews was the appreciation and connection with the natural environment whilst under the influence of psychedelic drugs, leading to deeper consciousness of nature – again, something that was not unheard in the 1960s (Speck, 1972, p. 60).

Jay: "There was a few friends and we used to go out into nature or even parks in Birmingham and take psychedelics and kinda look up the trees and go wow.... In fact I remember at that time just after I finished being a student I remember there was a particular tree in the park I used to sit and hang out with, originally when I started hanging out under that tree it didn't have any sense of being some meaningful thing it was just a beautiful tree and I was just hanging out under it probably somewhere you know, then after a while really having a sense that there is some personality in that particular tree and being like, ahaaa, that's interesting." **Int22: 3:37**

Arnie: "I think it opens your mind up, opens your eyes up a little bit I guess being under the influence puts a slant on it, yeah you probably never seen a dawn like it, when you're off your head on ecstasy and whatnot and as a result of that that is a very real experience for you at the time so erm yeah I do think it brings you closer to nature."

Int 16 8:18

Often such experiences were related whilst discussing spirituality, revealing the close associations between 'nature connection' drug use and spiritual experiences. At this juncture it may be helpful to term substances taken to induce spiritual experiences or trancelike states as entheogens (Taylor, 2005, p. 596). However the distinction between recreational drugs taken for personal relaxation or pleasure and entheogens taken for specific religious or spiritual purposes was not always clear-cut. For example the consumption of magic mushrooms can fall into both categories, being considered a recreational drug or a serious endeavour to connect with nature spirits (Wallis, 2003, p. 27). Community members occasionally referred to shamanic practices or indigenous tribes in relation to the otherworldly aspects of drug taking; however the use of entheogens in the very

purposeful, sustained sense was not evident at both Raven Hill or Yosemite and after questioning only seemed to amount to occasional practice in the past (Int 5 8:12). Within both communities, problems around drug addiction were referred to and indeed some openly revealed that they had been severely addicted to drugs in the past. For these community members the significance of 'nature connection' in their recovery cannot be overstated (Macnaghten & Urry, 2000, p. 180), it was emphasised clearly and repeatedly within the interviews. This journey quite often coincided with the journey from urban environment to rural setting and in this respect is very reminiscent of the British 1980s film 'Withnail and I'.⁵⁹ People with chronic drug dependency issues are generally referred to as the 'Brew Crew', the term being commonly used in the 1990s protest movement (Int 14 24:20), and without considerable recovery they would not be able to retain membership within these community structures.

Evident in the earlier quote from Theo above, there is a desire to have a similar experience to those experienced taking drugs by other means. This may be through body experiences of connecting with nature or through specific spiritual practices and meditation. Adrian Harris's study of Eco-Pagans within the 1990s road protests also notes this progression and desire to move on. Entheogens can act as stepping stones that catalyse a deeper level of connection that makes them unnecessary. This was true for Jay⁶⁰ who said he no longer used entheogens: 'They're my drugs now - birds, wild animals, trees' (Harris, 2008, p. 188).

5.4 Religion and Spirituality

I begin this section by commenting on parental influences. Many members recounted within the interviews that they had been influenced by Christian beliefs and practices typically within the family unit. Although not intentionally discussed during the interviews it was apparent that there were at best ambivalent and at times contemptuous attitudes towards Christian believers

⁵⁹ Directed by Bruce Robinson, 1987, see British Board of Film Classification, in References for Websites below.

⁶⁰ Note not the same person as I have quoted above.

and their related institutions.⁶¹ Three interviewees in particular spoke about the damaging effects of Christian religion, this quote from Heidi gives a flavour of what I am attempting to convey.

Heidi: “As a child and as a teenager I was brainwashed by a fundamentalist religion, like a Christian kind of cult, it was the single most damaging traumatic thing that’s ever happened and sort of left a trauma in my life for years and it’s still there, I am still dealing with the aftermath of it, so I am very anti-religion and I am aware that my anger about that definitely influences my views and I am not neutral about stuff but then I do see religion as one of the major evils in the world of you know, organised religion and the effects it's had on people throughout the century and still is, so yes I do get really [pause], it's something that makes me very angry so for that reason I am just really open-minded and fluid about my beliefs and I never sort of get stuck in any particular tradition or set of beliefs.” **Int 7 10:18**

Whilst not specifically mentioned within the interviews, I have had conversations at Raven Hill in which community members have criticised the historical role Christianity has played in creating the environmental crisis, a theory discussed previously. This is also a probable factor influencing the views of community members towards the Christian religion. Organised religion in general was perceived negatively by almost all those interviewed. There were strongly held views about how religious beliefs adversely influence society and particularly the individual person who may resist religious coercion. Barry here alludes to a Marxist-anarchist critique of religion indicating a degree of political awareness.

Barry: “I grew up as an atheist, I grew up in a household that was kind of, at times it was completely apolitical, completely suspect of device, of political device so it's not even like a Labour household, it was more kind of, it's all shit they are all lying conniving bastards aspiring to be the ruling class and, God was a state organisation for the simpleminded and you know I had no, you know I still kind of vibe with that [laughter] in terms of sponsored religion or, that’s

⁶¹ While not actually vocalised I did get the impression that some members who were aware of my own Christian tradition were holding back their true views on some of these matters.

probably a bit opinionated but I do kind of like spit on organised religion.” **Int 17 18:30**

Even the general term ‘religion’, as opposed to organised religion/religious institutions or Christian religion was perceived in an adverse way, with the term spirituality or spiritual tradition being preferred when talking about beliefs and practices. On only two occasions was the term religion/religious used in an affirmative sense: the first related to a member who considered his children to be very religious and by this seemed to infer they were certain or solid about what they believed and experienced of the gods (following one parent’s contemporary Heathen tradition). The other was an ex-member of Yosemite who had adopted a Mahayana Buddhist tradition as he felt the need for a single and more focussed religious tradition. Frequently I asked the interviewees to define for themselves the terms religion and spirituality, Gazza’s and Starla’s reply here is very representative of the overall tone.

Gazza: “I don’t know, religion to me implies more organised religion, more sort of, set lot of faith, which is tied to other people and stuff, where I guess my beliefs are more just what I kind of worked out for myself along the way, they are similar to what other people, some people believe, think about as well.” **Int 3 27:58**

Starla: “For me religion is, is, it’s the people in it [laughter] you can be in with spirit kind of thing but in religion it’s kind of coming through someone, through something or object, book or preacher or something like that, it’s quite dogmatic in its view..... When I think about spirituality and don’t think about those people involved in it, for me it’s really broad and so it’s not that it’s all good but it’s not, there’s not heavy negatives in it.” **Int 20 1:20:40**

As can be detected the emphasis is on the individual spiritual journey, perhaps individual authority, which contrasts with a definition of religion as being set, dogmatic and inherently linked to people in authority. Community members’ attitude to religion and spirituality here supports my decision to distinguish between religion and spirituality as outlined in Chapter 1.

Diverse is the term I would choose in describing the spiritual traditions evident at both Raven Hill and Yosemite. The following labels and terms were used throughout the interviews when I enquired about their personal spiritual traditions:

Pagan, Goddess, Shamanic, Core Shamanism, Meditation, Native American Spirituality, indigenous tribes, Norse Paganism, ‘nature

connection' or alternatively simply 'nature', Hedge Witch, Wiccan, Reclaiming Witch, Solstice and Equinox celebrations, Gaia (list 1).

These represented the labels and terms predominantly used during the interviews, with each member (excluding those self-defining as atheist) associating with one or two labels or practices. Nevertheless some members, two or three in each of the communities, identified with a greater number of labels and practices, listed below, indicating a degree of eclecticism within their practice. Also the main focus of these traditions appeared to be broader in principle, encompassing the esoteric, otherworldly and purely spiritual, which had little or no connection to nature. The term 'New-Age' has been used to describe this degree of diversity (Heelas, 1996; Woodhead, 2002, p. 253) which corresponds reasonably well with my analysis contained in Chapter 4.3. Nonetheless I will employ the term 'eclectic' or 'eclectics' as it was predominantly the label used by the community members themselves and as I have outlined above the term 'New Age' can at times be confusing, having two or more meanings. I therefore follow Bloch and Tomalin in using an alternative (Bloch, 1998b; Tomalin, 2009, p. 22). The following terms then were used by these members in addition to the ones listed above:

chakras, solar plexus, third eye, angels and archangels, fairies, ley lines, astrology, star signs, Aetherius Society, transcendental meditation, kama, amma, Sai Baba, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jesus tradition, Eckhart Tolle, sweat lodges, synchronicity and tarot cards (list 2).

It was interesting to note that three couples practiced a different spiritual tradition to their partner, a reality that they were well aware of before the interviews took place (Int 12 19:37 Int 17 59:10).

Though the types of spirituality and practice listed above are manifestly diverse, a basic similarity can be detected within list 1 appertaining to the theme of nature or organic environment. Letcher also noted this tendency within protesting Eco-Pagans and called that which united them a 'core Pagan doxa' (Letcher, 2003, p. 67). Community members recognised this underlying unity and often used the term Pagan as an overarching term to describe the similar features inherent within seemingly different traditions (Int 1 1:41:30). Oak, who practices a contemporary Heathen tradition, explains this dynamic.

Oak: “Every pagan religion generally has say the God of hunting and stuff just because one person calls it a particular name and another person calls it something else, but it is the same God sort of thing it's just like you know, there's a sun god and you know, most pagan religions they are all the same they just kind of got different takes on the same thing, so you can work with them but, it's just different shades of the same kind of erm [pause] like water spirits and yeah its all the same thing we got different names in mind than Druids have but it's the same thing, that's how it kind of works.” **Int 13 26:40**

This ‘core Pagan doxa’ has similar features to the early religious pluralism of the USA as defined by David O.Moberg, where there was ‘ a philosophy of mutual permissiveness at the group level which recognizes the need for specific preferences and beliefs’ (Moberg in Honigsheim, 1965, p. 105). However in this context it seems to not only apply to spiritual differences between groups but also differences between individual community members.

Throughout the interviews I also became aware that I was perhaps only recording a snapshot of an on-going process. The spiritual progressions from one tradition to another or the slow evolution from eclectic forms of spirituality to a single preferred tradition were voiced. Theo here discusses his steady progression from eclectic spiritual traditions practiced in his past life to a ‘core practice’ of Shamanism.

Theo: “I think I have always had a sense that although I'm an eclectic and I love all these different traditions, I love all the different flavours, all the different ways in that these different traditions bring about, Sufism to an extent as well, I have had some connections with and Christianity of course, [pause] but ultimately it feels like I am most at home in the shamanic kind of scene really and over time that's become more and more really just my core way of being, core practice.” **Int 8 21:28**

Another striking tendency within both Raven Hill and Yosemite was the resistance to label at all, community members appeared very comfortable discussing their spiritual experience and practice; however there seemed a reluctance and hesitancy by many to categorise their spiritual experience. Instead they preferred to use general statements such as, my personal relationship with spirit, in process with spirit, in tune with spirit. Starla explains here why she might express herself in this way.

Starla: “Yes it’s something about identity and something about labelling that I think I am not comfortable with, like I'm really comfortable with permaculture like as a label or I am really comfortable with intentional community as a label but I'm really uncomfortable with like commune as a label for some reason and the same reason I am really uncomfortable with like spirituality.”

Int 20 52:07

I will discuss this reluctance to label or categorise in much greater detail in Chapter 9. Having explored in each of the interviews the expressed spiritual labels and language, I was eager to also to enquire further about the essence and practice of members’ spiritual traditions. I therefore explored some common themes within religious studies, seeking to understand further their spiritual traditions. Firstly, using as scant and vague language as I could, so as not to influence their response, I enquired about the location of the Divine⁶², was it immanent or transcendent, near or far, this geographical distinction being used in many studies (Hinnells, 2005, p. 198). Community members invariably paused for thought when asked the question perhaps indicating this distinction was something they did not consider regularly. The predominant answer was near (immanent) with only one interviewee responding far (transcendent). Five interviewees indicated that for them it was both near and far.

Neo: “I think it's everywhere, I think it is within us, I think we are part of it all, I think it's everywhere you know, way out into the far depths of space.” **Int 8 59:45**

In this quote from Daisy we see, as might be expected, the Divine is near, both within nature and within herself.

Daisy: “Yeah close for me yeah totally..... But I see it as nature all the time like within me as well.” **Int 9 30:00**

So for these particular community members interacting with nature is actually interacting with the Divine. Such notions could shed light on the way some members choose to respond when asked about their spirituality in that they talked solely about connection to nature or interaction with nature. This was Pancho’s response when asked directly about his spiritual tradition.

⁶² The term ‘Divine’ here is being used in a non-specific sense, incorporating god, gods, goddess, sacred spirit, spirit force, life force etc.

Pancho: “There's something in there about respect for life, in all its forms, trying to nourish that and create opportunities for life and there's a connection with [pause] connection and appreciation of everything that is around me particularly nonhuman things, and yeah a particular respect for and appreciation and learning from the nonhuman world, more than human world, and some sense of life force within everything, that I am particularly respectful of animals and plants.” **Int 1 50:05**

India: “That's like hedge-laying, you know hedge-laying is a fantastically spiritual activity as far as I'm concerned, you're right in there with everything smelling it all and...”

Interviewer: “Getting scratched?”

India: “Well there is that aspect ... I don't know I found it, I just love it, I just think it's a fantastic occupation and it's, it's quiet and effective and good for the ecology and it's good for the soul [laughter].”

Int 19 1:22:05

Community members like Pancho and India who chose to express themselves in this fashion also tended to have a resistance to defining clearly their spiritual beliefs and tradition. Similar to Starla quoted above, they were comfortable identifying with Permaculture and Ecological, definitions which for them may encompass both the natural and spiritual realms, with the distinction being blurred or even non-existent. The Divine and Nature in these instances become inseparably one.⁶³ A similar synthesis to this can also be recognised in some ecofeminist literature (Collard & Contrucci, 1988, p. 26; Daly, 1979, p. 111; Gaard, 1993, p. 309) and Harris's study of Eco-Pagans (2008, p. 29). In relation to Ian Jamison's research on the esoteric/animist spectrum as discussed earlier (Chapter 4.4), community members' practice is clearly located towards the animist end of his spectrum, favouring the day-to-day embodied connection with nature. This distinction helps to differentiate between the majority of community members who concurred with the first list above (Animist) and the minority who displayed a greater degree of 'eclecticism', the second list above, some of which is almost only symbolic of nature (Esoteric).

⁶³ The understanding and experience of the Divine for such community members will need further fleshing out (Chapter 8 & 9), it should not be assumed it is similar in essence to other religious traditions.

Next I used the distinction between certain and provisional in relation to what the interviewee's knew of the Divine (Mitchell, 1961, pp. 217-218). Being 'certain' meaning they held strongly to their understandings and beliefs maintaining that they would not change in time, whereas being 'provisional' meaning that what they understood and believed was as clear and firm as they could be at this present time but recognised that in the development of one's life these beliefs and understandings might well change (Hinnells, 2005, pp. 92-93). All interviewees responded with 'provisional', with the exception of one member who was 'certain' and whom I will discuss below. One member refused to answer, possibly perceiving it as some sort of trick question. Yet another member responded creatively by saying they were both in that the understanding and beliefs they had gained so far were certain with the rider that the Divine was so vast that vastly more beliefs and understandings were out there to be gained (Int 8 1:02:20). I speculate that this member was defining his understanding and beliefs as certain but limited, not **all**-encompassing or universal as could be said of some religious beliefs e.g. New Religious Movements (Beckford, 1986).

I also enquired about beliefs associated with time, and in particular whether the community members have beliefs associated with the creation of nature, or whether they held to a more circular understanding where nature had no beginning, having always been in existence. I expected the latter notion to dominate with a clear rejection of a creation narrative. However the overwhelming response was ambivalence to the question; it did not concern them and they were not particularly curious to know. In a similar vein I asked about what they considered might be the future for nature and humankind; again, perhaps surprisingly, I encountered a real ambivalence about the question. Some community members predicted the demise of humankind but a continuance of nonhuman life. What were patently absent were any beliefs about a heavenly realm, utopian concepts, Nirvana or blissful existence. Finally I enquired about what they believed would happen to them personally when they died, what transpired was a mixture of 'I don't know', 'not really bothered' and 'I will return to the earth as compost'. However, some community members articulated the concept of reincarnation. Some believed they could only return as humans and others they could return as any kind of living being. For these community members the concept of ancestors also seemed to be particularly important, both learning about them and sensing their presence.

Throughout the interviews I slowly became aware that notions of deities were not being expressed. Even when community members talked about the Goddess they seem to do so in a way that downplayed the characteristics of the Goddess, they preferred to emphasise a more ambiguous relationship, one centred on personal feelings rather than features of the Goddess. Willow in this quote expresses clearly her views on deities and in so doing reinforces some of the observations I have already made relating to spiritual progression, aversion to labels and Christian heritage.

Willow: "I suppose at one point I was, I may-be called myself a Pagan and I was kind of looking towards that framework maybe, maybe, and trying to fit, I suppose because we were, had come from the Christian tradition to like protesting where people were Pagan and I suppose it's kind of trying to think maybe needing a label or I don't know, but I don't feel like that now and I don't see that there's gods and goddesses and people in the sky." **Int 19 49:40**

The deeper questioning that I have briefly described above added considerably to my understanding of the community members' spiritual traditions. It also highlighted one particular community member that almost contradicted every generality that I have described thus far. Oak was not hesitant about *labelling* his spiritual tradition as Norse pagan. He used the word *religion* in a very positive way, defining religion as 'very solid', contrasting it with 'wafty new-age nebulous touchy-feely spirituality' (Int 13 41:40). Oak communicated a clear concept of *deity*, closely related to historical Norse mythology (Blain, 2001, p. 13), who resided *far* from the Earth. Oak was *certain* about his beliefs, which included a clearly defined *creation* story, albeit mythical. When Oak finally dies he believes he is destined for a banqueting and feasting hall far above in the *heavens*. Oak's spiritual tradition was like no other member within both Raven Hill and Yosemite, possessing a very structured and clearly defined belief system. However I did note that when discussing the differences between his own tradition and other people within the community (see earlier quote in this section) he emphasised that they were all really the same thing. So the very structured religious-like tradition of Oak could be accommodated within the pluralistic community ethic. Having discussed in detail the essence of community members' spiritual beliefs I then turned my attention to the ceremonial and ritual aspects of their traditions.

5.4.1 Ceremony, Rituals and Shrines

Discussing the place of ceremony and ritual within the communities, both personal and group, helped to reveal further the significance of spirituality within community life. Ceremonies, rituals and shrines have a propensity to make visible the invisible beliefs or spiritual experiences of community members. Individual rituals and sole practices were frequently mentioned in the interviews, these tending to be very intimate and generally conducted in the private areas of the community or alternatively in the woods or on the land when no one else was around⁶⁴. Many of the rituals seem to have a specific goal or focus, for example if an important decision needed to be made or to influence matters outside the person's control. This sense of purposefulness is amply demonstrated here by Heidi.

Heidi: "It's funny because I don't know what I believe in but I do do my own little ritual sometimes if there is something that I really want help with or, I definitely, I do create little ceremonies on my own and ask for help, I feel quite witchy when I do that kind of stuff I really enjoy it, whether it's real or not I don't know but it kind of doesn't matter because it supports me and it feels good and in that way it serves its purpose, if you think about it and analyse it too much it kind of takes all the fun out of it." **Int 7 6:48**

A sense of thanksgiving also seemed central with votive offerings being common or even simple body actions to emphasise appreciation of nature (Int 2 28:10). At Raven Hill some members conducted their own ceremony before felling trees.

Theo: "Yes I will always do that, will always thank the tree and bless it and, smudge it and so on before I fell a tree yes definitely. And also feel into it whether it is right to fell the tree in the first place that's the beginning of the process." **Int 5 46:29**

However not all members of Raven Hill concurred with Theo's understanding and practice, tensions were expressed by other members who just wanted to get on with felling the tree; they considered that communication with the tree

⁶⁴ In relation to these personal and present aspects of ritual see Bron Szerszynski's use of Roy Rappaport's distinction between canonical and indexical rituals in 'Ecological rites'. (2002, pp. 57-58)

was not possible and that those who did were 'putting their personal feelings onto the situation' (Int 6 45:40).

I consider the shared ceremonies and rituals particularly key to understanding the role of religion and spirituality within environmental communities. There were differences here between Raven Hill and Yosemite; I will begin with Raven Hill. Members stated clearly that no united communal ceremony took place, instead what occasionally happened was individual members stated their intentions to conduct a ceremony, an open invitation, usually by word-of-mouth, would be given to all the members. At the appointed time and place those who wished gathered and took part. Ceremonies were generally timed to coincide with equinoxes, solstices and phases of the moon⁶⁵ or alternatively a specific purpose which may be beneficial for the whole community for example the influencing of a planning decision which may not be able to wait until the next phase of the moon (Int 5 48:20). In a similar vein to individual ceremony, there were communal thanksgivings for the spring which provided water for the community. Not everyone joined in with these communal ceremonies and the general pattern and content appeared to vary. However the majority seemed similar in form to the 'ad hoc' ceremonies conducted at the 1990s road protest camps documented by Letcher (Letcher, 2003, p. 75). On occasions a sweat lodge or hot tub may also be prepared, but whether the people making use of it understood they were taking part in a ceremony or just relaxing at the party was ambiguous.⁶⁶ No specific location was set aside for ceremony at Raven Hill with it usually occurring around the natural spring or fire pit. For some community members the flames and fire themselves were considered sacred, they requested that the fire be respected and only pure wood be used as fuel, to burn man made materials or inorganic rubbish would make the fire impure (Field notes Raven Hill Autumn 2011). Although not

⁶⁵ Solstice and full moon celebrations were also noted by Maxey at Brithdir Mawr although the central activity appeared to revolve around a sweat lodge (2002, p. 228).

⁶⁶ Also note sweat lodges were observed by Maxey at Brithdir Mawr and he comments that members did not 'prescriptively follow any rules or traditions such as excluding children or always having a fire tender and a leader of the sweat' furthermore that some community members 'didn't feel right' at the sweat and played no 'part in the ceremony' (2002, pp. 228-230).

everybody attends the communal ceremonies, it was unusual for community members to be absent from both the ceremony and the party which often accompanied a ceremony. I did note that the frequency of such ceremonies was much less at Raven Hill than Yosemite.

At Yosemite the community has committed itself to seasonal celebrations which are broadly based on the eight Celtic fire festivals Beltane, Summer solstice, Lammass, Autumn equinox, Samhain, Winter solstice, Imbolc, Vernal equinox, and in this respect are regular and scheduled. This tradition can in turn be linked back to the 1990s protest camps (Letcher, 2001a, p. 63). In a similar way to practices at Raven Hill the ceremonies are led by different members of the community. Although this is an agreed pattern no formal administrative structure exists to make it happen, and community members are not required to lead a ceremony if they do not wish. I received the impression that a few members who were enthusiastic about ritual and ceremony voluntarily took responsibility; nonetheless these members could not be considered spiritual leaders or guides. This more fraternal approach, which can be located within contemporary paganism generally, has been contrasted by Hutton with 'New age' tendencies which are more accepting of teachers and leading guru figures (2000, p. 412). Like at Raven Hill elements of the ceremony were usually different each time, a creative combination of the particular fire festival and the members own spiritual tradition. This continually changing pattern made it difficult for members to inform me of the usual practice however from their responses it seemed to revolve around a 'core pagan doxa' as outlined earlier, in particular the Celtic four element system. The casting of a simple circle and honouring the directional elements: Air, Water, Earth and Fire. Barry here explains one such ceremony for Imbolc but, given the tendency that I have outlined, it should not be construed as typical.

Barry: "The next day we had our Imbolc ceremony.... We did it on the dark Moon so it was late January, first snowdrops, kind of its marker for me. We did a little bit of celebration of the transition between nixis the quarter point between solstice and equinox so it's that transition from winter, winter starting to crack, the seed cracking and new sprouts, life coming back, the birds starting to get more active, as I mentioned snowdrops nodding their heads and we, I just put up a willow Gateway that's been moved for the kids, it's the one with the tassels on it [Barry pointing] and there is white for winter and red for equinox and so they're together because it's the halfway between the

two and that was put to the north-east of the fire, that is the time of, if the year is transposed onto a compass the eight sacred directions North South East West and then North East is the place of Imbolc and yeah to the north-east of the fire and we did a ritual of passing through the, we had our, we had relics of the solstice, we had some wishes that we made at solstice tied onto the archway, and we took those off, we passed through the arch, took those off put them on the fire so that they would like be taken back to spirit, the opportunity of manifestation and it signified the movement, and we came together and played drums and sang some songs and it had a cohesive quality.”

Interviewer: “Was this the whole community together?”

Barry: “Pretty much, someone might have been offsite but it was pretty much everyone. And it's not through de rigueur, it's through collective choice.” **Int 17 52:47**

This last sentence from Barry is telling and reading between the lines it could perhaps indicate tensions around the attendance at communal ceremonies, it is interesting that Barry chose to stress ‘collective choice’, perhaps a reference to Yosemite’s formally agreed intention to celebrate the fire festivals. Later on in the interview he alluded to situations in which there had been ridicule around communal ceremony (Int17: 57:59), perhaps indicating this had taken place in other settings (Rountree, 2006, p. 111). The following quote from Arnie also supports the notion that there may perhaps be tensions around communal ceremony at Yosemite, with similar sentiments being expressed in interviews at Raven Hill.

Interviewer: “If we could talk specifically about spirituality as a [community] glue, what do you think?”

Arnie: “Alright for some people, it's something I will sever myself from, there is yeah obviously there's a certain amount of ritual and spirituality here, I am of the impression it's not my beliefs so why should I participate, fine you go ahead I'll stand there quietly but you know I'm not fully engaged in this and you know yeah if you want to, you know, welcome the seeds in and have a little ritual and light a candle for the seeds then great go for your life, erm I suppose my fear of it has at times been to ridicule, take the piss whatever, laugh about erm, but yeah it has its place here if it rocks your boat great but it doesn't with me so.” **Int 16 58:08**

Although Arnie may not be in full agreement with every aspect of the communal ceremony, he is nevertheless able to take part in some sections that he agrees with due to an important dynamic around the Eco-pagan ceremony. Ingrid explains how in this reply when I asked about her experience of communal ceremony.

Ingrid: “I almost feel a bit voyeuristic about it, I feel a bit like, I'm not the kind of connecting with the mother if you like, if it's a, you know, a ceremony for that kind of thing, so yeah I feel I am watching other people's very personal experience of that, and I'm doing it kind of from an outside perspective I'm not there with them, I am just kind of just stood back from it slightly.”

Interviewer: “And that allows you the position of staying there, or withdrawing altogether Is it a place that you can negotiate a little bit further in if you feel like it, a little bit further out?”

Ingrid: “Yeah, and there are definitely, like there are times when I think I take more from those sorts of little ceremonies, [laugh] I think when I'm emotionally a bit all over the shop, I am a bit more engaged with it, and a bit more open to it, I think a lot of it is, personally for me is that I am just quite close to it, and perhaps if I were more open, perhaps if I did some personal work on that, I would be more kind of open to it.” **Int 21 28:30**

This indistinct, fluid quality around communal ceremony was also recognised by the community members as operating at the 1990s road protest sites (Int 2 10:46). In such settings as these it may not be clear who was taking part and who is merely an interested bystander observing ceremony (Letcher, 2003, p. 77; Pike, 2001, p. 211). Even though not in agreement with all aspects of the communal ceremony I did infer from Arnie and other community members who were not enthusiastic about ceremony, a sense of respect and occasionally an acceptance that ‘there may be something in it’ (Int 8 20:20). This deep and tangible respect may in fact emanate from the camaraderie born of living cheek by jowl alongside each other. Even so, living closely in this way did seem to produce certain frustrations around communal ceremony as Sabrina states bluntly here.

Sabrina: “If you only see each other occasionally then you don't, get that you can come together for a spiritual thing and come away again and get on with your lives, which is what a lot of Pagans do, but here it's different.... [brief discussion around hypocrisy]... so I'm a

hypocrite and that's fine but I find it quite difficult having spiritual rituals with people that I know don't do all the things they say that they do when they are being spiritual, they are kind of in their spiritual space and they make all these promises and they go away and break them, and I can't stand that." **Int 14 53:29** [brackets mine]

I do not consider this fluid dynamic around communal ceremony either accidental or incidental but instead is related to the mobilisation methods used generally within social movements (Melucci, 1996, pp. 111-112) and also one of the predominant means by which many 1990s road protesters became Eco-pagans, by experiencing as bystanders 'ad hoc' rituals (Harris, 2008, p. 24; Letcher, 2003, p. 77). This centred rather than bounded approach is reminiscent of those who gather around an open fire, some like it hot and stand near, others preferring to just get a little bit warm at a distance and many others in between these two extremes. This centred approach then resists formal distinctions of who's in and who's out, who's taking part and who's not. The individual is free to move closer or further away without any compulsion to stay within a set boundary. Nevertheless community members may have aspirations that those who are less spiritual will become more spiritual and move closer to the fire.

Fran: "Spirituality in the community can be a unifying force for good even if some haven't any relationship with it yet." **Int 23 9:00**

It was the 'yet' within this quote that caught my attention and although denied after further questioning it did seem to infer an agenda or hope of change. Along with storytelling around the fire (Letcher, 2003, p. 67) I consider experiencing communal ceremony to be crucial in the spread of a spiritual tradition such as Eco-paganism. These features match up well with what is termed vernacular or folk religion (Bowman, 2004), a concept I will build upon later in Chapter 8.

Earlier I suggested that there may have been some spiritual development or spiritual progress for particular community members. This also became apparent in relation to ceremony at both Raven Hill and Yosemite. Alice here outlines this evolution for her which seemed to progress towards a need for less and less ceremony.

Alice: "To be honest I think moving here [to Yosemite], because the whole busyness of it all, and the fact that the nature is always just there, and the reason we're here is because of nature, it's very defined, ...with [Liz] leaving and having less ceremony, we always do

some ritual every now and then about something or other, you know like when we were doing planning there was quite a lot of ritual involved in that, we had the small one at Imbolc, it tends to get smaller and smaller all the time, It's more like a little bit of it will come into things more now rather than having to make time and space for it, but for me I feel like, you know even my urge of having that has just really dissipated massively, I don't know but daily life has just taken over, but also like because, because it's all around me I don't have to go searching for it." **Int 18 47:38**

Throughout the interviews, only one member, from Raven Hill, indicated that they had recently developed a greater appetite for ceremony. For some community members, ceremony seemed embedded within their everyday life with the shift to a rural environment being pinpointed as a significant factor in this development. In fact this more integrated approach to ceremony and ritual formed part of a community discourse which was in fact centred on time and the geographical location of ceremony. The example India uses here outlines the discourse well.

India: "I do remember one instance which would, might kind of illustrate it, and very much puts me in the task-orientated category [laughter] you know that we have sheep grazing and it was Midsummer and I kind of look after the sheep so every morning and evening I would go and carry buckets of water for them, they were very thirsty and one evening I was asked if I was coming to the water ritual, no I'm going to water the sheep and I remember that cos it was quite poignant for me, and I realised I was actually doing my own water ritual, every morning and every evening and giving it to the sheep so I didn't actually feel any need to do a ritual to appreciate water because I was being really grateful for the water that we collected in the water butts, Through actually sort of getting your hands dirty comes my appreciation and gratitude and I mean sometimes I just find it completely overwhelming." **Int 19 47:38**

Here the distinction between spiritual feelings, ceremony and work task are blurred. The tensions pivot around time, the setting aside of time especially for ceremony and of course location. The embedded, integrated approach

emphasised by India and others (Int 14 18:50)⁶⁷ centres on individual experiences, emotions and responses in the moment, (synchronic bias) (Hall, 1978, p. 14). Such experiences, emotions and responses cannot be scheduled or marshalled into specific time or geographical limits. For such members the communal dimension comes when recalling the interaction with nature or spiritual feelings at communal meals or alternatively little chats around and about (Field notes Raven Hill autumn 2011 and Yosemite spring 2012). Such encounters and responses are considered real and 'authentic' (Int 7 23:33), not manufactured or reproduced as might be the case at a formal communal ceremony. The other part of this discourse advocates a more communal approach, for instance in communal ceremony members were visibly united as one (Int 5 32:00), the human interaction, which can also be considered part of nature and divinity, is also important and can produce a sense of spiritual connection with other members and the land (Int 24 1:00). This more diachronic approach not only sets apart time and space, for the communal ceremony, but also sets apart modes of being, work from worship or veneration. This ingrained pattern of mainstream culture was considered reductionist and therefore challenged by some 1970s UK communes (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 5). It was also identified within UK environmental communities by Ian Maxey (2002, p. 284). It may be this type of separation, the spiritual from everyday life, which touched a raw nerve with Sabrina (see quote above); where she discusses a type of hypocrisy, I would certainly identify Sabrina's spiritual tradition as integrated. In a similar manner this next quote from Arnie highlights tensions between spiritual ceremony and the instrumental needs of the community, a factor which was raised in interview at both Raven Hill and Yosemite.

Arnie: "I find it [communal ceremony] quite frustrating and dare I say it a bit wishy-washy sometimes, it's just like well, you know, if you had that much enthusiasm for getting the wood out of the woods as you do for putting on a ritual, we wouldn't be having to buy our own wood in, I am a more practical person I guess rather than a spiritual person, that is me, kind of me being quite harsh with it I think, but yeah sometimes it's like that." **Int 16 1:05:52**

⁶⁷ An 'integrated' approach to rituals was also identified by Ian Jamison at the Landmatters environmental community (Jamison, 2011, p. 167).

This discourse also relates to space, for those who prefer a more integrated approach, all of nature is considered sacred wherever they might happen to be. However, in communal ceremony, location and setting is important, as it frequently takes place at specially significant or sacred spaces. At different times in its existence the members of Yosemite have designated areas for ceremony and ritual; however these have also been contested. For example an area fairly central to the communal area had in the past been marked out for ceremony. However it was logistically challenging to walk around and avoid such an area whilst going about everyday life and judging from the well-worn paths across the said area the instrumental needs of the community appeared to have won the day (Int 18 36:00). Ian Maxey has also identified a similar discourse within at the Brithdir Mawr community in relation to a proposal for a sacred space for meditation.

“The desire for a sacred space also says several things about life in the grouping. Not only does it suggest the powerful roles spirituality played for many members, it also implied that some residents felt more focus on this aspect of life was required. One reason for this was their experience of a lack of peace and quiet. Such residents found living with the sometimes constant through flow of people in the courtyard, for example, too much.” (2002, p. 137).

I will discuss such community tensions in greater detail in Chapter 6.3.1 and Chapter 7.7. But for now I suggest that there seemed to be a tension between some community members who appreciated designated areas or sacred spaces for communal ceremony and others members who preferred a more integrated and informal approach that did not require a dedicated space. Also relevant to this discourse is the assertion that to be ‘authentic’ there must be a real connection and interaction with the physical aspects of nature. Here then it is realised that there can be a divide between the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’ human construct. In the communal ceremony where nature is sometimes symbolically displayed or enacted there is a possibility that it becomes the group or individual’s constructed reality that is of ultimate value. This is phenomenon has been identified in contemporary paganism more generally (Jamison, 2011, p. 134) and is sometimes associated with the urban/rural divide. Somatic ways of being are therefore key to understanding the integrated spiritual approach, this seems almost dependent on a rural context where nature can be continually experienced. Such distinctions although not verbalised in such terms are nonetheless comprehended. Negative references to ‘crushed velvet’ etc. (Int 7 15: 44),

associated with formal ceremony within contemporary paganism more generally (Letcher, 2001a, p. 56), is one such indicator but it also can be detected in an interesting conversation that I had with Sabrina at Raven Hill. In general conversation Sabrina expressed her negative feelings about some urban pagans, saying that she felt on occasions more affinity with Christians who were genuinely connected to the land and nature, as some urban pagans, were only really only venerating their constructed image of nature (Raven Hill field notes spring 2011).

The environmental community setting is of course not hermetically sealed and isolated from wider social movements and society, so I did enquire about ceremonies conducted by individual members away from Raven Hill and Yosemite (Halfacree, 2006, p. 324). Theo, from Raven Hill, was very open and honest in stating that most of his needs for ceremony were 'met off-site' (Int 5 31:28) and perhaps unsurprisingly he was associating with a religious grouping based in the nearby towns previously mentioned. In fact most community members at both Raven Hill and Yosemite supplemented their need to socialise by linking with therapeutic, spiritual, religious or political groups within these towns on a regular basis. One group in particular cropped up in the interviews and involved members of both Raven Hill and Yosemite. The group, which was actually a regional grouping, seemed to form part of a wider movement which had links with groups in the USA. It was named The Art of Mentoring AOMM. The central purpose of AOMM is grouped around nature connection, education and Native American forms of spirituality. I will describe and comment in detail about the AOMM, including how its modes of organisation form a significant community discourse which clashes with Eco-paganism, in Chapter 8. However what I would like to stress here is that community members engaging with AOMM are developing a distinctive tradition within environmental communities which I have termed 'core shamanism (developing)'.

There was a clear distinction between Raven Hill and Yosemite in relation to shrines. Raven Hill had no visible shrines in the communal spaces; individual members however did, depending on their tradition, have shrines within their personal spaces. By contrast, Yosemite had a number of shrines in the communal areas and surrounding land. I counted six, but there could well have been more. The water shrine adjacent to the water pump was arranged around the remains of a tree trunk; various seashells and stones were scattered randomly around. A small vase was also tucked into the trunk and a porcelain pot in the shape of a hand was also propped against

the shrine. Another shrine was centred on a twisted root section of a tree; crystals and distinctly coloured stones were dotted around and candles placed on naturally occurring flat spots of the root. I did not enquire specifically about shrines throughout the interviews. However on a few occasions personal shrines were mentioned. India for instance had constructed a shrine, which consisted of all her worldly possessions, on the last evening before she was to be evicted from a protest site. Also she showed me an earthen clay female figure which she had placed in the roots of a tree. When I enquired about its location and significance she said she could not quite explain it, but it did feel natural and right for it to be there. The proliferation of shrines in the communal spaces at Yosemite perhaps indicates a greater tolerance of public, communal displays associated with individual spiritual traditions, this feature being largely absent at Raven Hill. In the next chapter I will comment further on this visible aspect of spiritual practices within the communal spaces and moreover how it points to the place of spirituality within these environmental communities.

5.5 Modern Science, Technology and Rationality

Attitudes to science and technology were frequently expressed throughout the interviews and where they were not I intentionally solicited views on such matters. Given the dominance of these themes within Western culture I sought to explore the degree to which they were embraced, reluctantly accepted or rejected outright. Commonly members demonstrated a high degree of knowledge and sophisticated attitudes towards science and technology (Oved, 2013, p. 243). This is perhaps not surprising as environmentalism more generally 'still remains a perspective derived from findings in the sciences, ecology, toxicology, epidemiology and the assessment of energy supply and demand' (Milton, 1993, p. 50). Most of those interviewed were quick to separate out the different elements of scientific method and rational ways of thinking and technology. In general there was no real antagonism towards science per se, however, as could perhaps be expected, technology came in for some brutal criticism.

Karen: "See I've got quite scientific mind, but I do think that science and nature and spirituality cross in a lot of ways, I think science is a way of explaining a lot of things that are spiritual and magical and you know and cos it's an explanation doesn't take anything away from the

dramatic of it all, but in terms of I suppose modern technology [pause] frightening [nervous laughter].”

Interviewer: “What GM and stuff like?”⁶⁸

Karen: “Yeah it’s that thing of whole standing on the shoulders of giants kind of thing, you know, they come out with all these different ideas and technology but then applying it so badly, radiation and nuclear power and things like that, things that just can’t be undone in lifetimes, and GM you know, you could ruin food chains so yes I think it’s a very scary yeah.” **Int 13 49:33**

The cultural influences surrounding the scientific endeavour were also pinpointed as crucial, with the unhealthy consequences of business interests mixing with technology being commonly cited (Int 1 101:30). A distinction was also made between highly complex technology and low-level technology as Jay here articulates.

Interviewer: “And science and technology?”

Jay: “I’m very anti- [long period of laughter].”

Interviewer: “What’s this? [Pointing to mobile phone].”

Jay: “Strongly anti-science and technology. No I’m not anti-science I am more anti-technology and I don’t believe there’s been much invented of much use in the past seven or eight hundred years, but I do like bicycles and sewing machines, both of them could be said to be done more harm than good*, but as compromises in the modern world they’re not too bad. I don’t like cars, I don’t particularly like houses, I don’t particularly like aeroplanes, boats are great but I don’t see why they need engines you know, like that, but that’s just a set of opinions and I go with the modern world, I had quite long period of not using any motorised vehicles which was great, some years ago, and I’d be very happy to carry on doing that.” * [I think he actually meant ‘more good than harm’] **Int 22 45:30**

⁶⁸ I introduced the theme of genetic modification here as it was commonly referred to in other interviews as a disturbing technological development (Int 19 1:32:00).

The differences between scientific methods on the one hand and reason and logic on the other are also mapped out here in this quote from Ingrid who is on the whole agnostic about matters spiritual.

Ingrid: “I think reason and logic are very important to me, but not necessarily science, does that kind of makes sense?”

Interviewer: “Yeah so you would look for a reasonable explanation not necessarily a Divine one or spiritual one.”

Ingrid: “Yes but without it excluding the possibility that it could be something bigger.”

Interviewer: “Beyond science? Beyond scientific explanation?”

Ingrid: “Yeah.” **Int 21 55:55**

Also evident in this quote is an awareness of the limitations of scientific knowledge, an inclination which resonated with other members when they talked of science as being only part of a more holistic approach to their attempts to understand the world (Int 17 1:27:10); a feature also detected within Alex Plows’ study of the EDA movement (Plows, 2002, p. 175) and Adrian Harris’ study of Eco-paganism (Harris, 2008, p. 204). It appeared in particular that personal experience and emotions needed another frame of reference or an expansion of the of the traditional understanding of scientific knowledge in validating these personal experiences as can be detected here in this quotation from Barry.

Barry: “So an emotional experience that I might have in the presence of something is no less part of my reality than a measurement that I can make of its physical form, and the fact that I might be alone in having that emotional experience around a certain incident or thing again doesn't mean that it's any less valid as part of my experience and that it's not reproducible or that it's not measurable doesn't mean that that's not a scientific observation that I've made.” **Int 17 56:44**

Within both Raven Hill and Yosemite there did seem to be a real struggle between on the one hand a tendency to incorporate rationality and technology into their everyday life and on the other hand a striving to not be totally defined by the rational approach and to question the social and environmental implications of an excessive reliance on technology. This latter perspective could be described as a romantic environmental ethic (Letcher, 2001b; Lewis, 1992, p. 122; Tomalin, 1999, p. 99). The observations that I gathered whilst participating within communal life are

particularly relevant here. There is no doubting that 'low-impact' environmental communities interact with less technology on a daily basis than say mainstream UK society. Nevertheless, complex state-of-the-art technology does play an essential role in community communications and the provision of electricity which in turn makes the often hard reality of living on the land a lot easier. I commonly observed at Raven Hill and Yosemite community members using mobile phones to communicate with each other and with people associated with the wider social movement. From my observations such logistical tools resulted in tremendous savings of time, energy and finance. The production of electricity with solar panels also plays a vital part and without these daily life would be a much greater struggle. Another area which seems particularly pertinent to mention here is healthcare. The general tenet within environmental communities is that health comes from union with the environment and nature-connection, with herbal remedies being preferred. However, occasions do arise when community members accept health care treatment which involves the use of highly complex technology or alternatively a course of antibiotics (Field notes Yosemite spring 2012 Raven Hill autumn 2011). This implicit tension is acknowledged here by Jay.

Interviewer: "So low-level technology is okay but.."

Jay: "Only as a matter of necessity, you know Stone Age would be fine by me, I mean I can say that now but I suspect when I get, when I need antibiotics I might have a different opinion." **Int 22 46:22**

Notions of radically eschewing technology, inherent within romantic and anarco-primitivist forms of environmentalism, may therefore be placing unrealistic expectations upon community members. These expectations could perhaps stem from outside, within the wider social movement, from people who have little real everyday experiences of living close to the land (Schwarz & Schwarz, 1998, pp. 52-53). Despite the practical compromises that are made at both Raven Hill and Yosemite, most community members are selective in the technology they utilise and express criticisms of the indiscriminate use of advanced technology. It is for this reason that I have placed both rural communities within the 'nature-centred' type of my four fold typology (Table 2) as they exhibit a resistance to relying on technology. However the tensions that I have outlined above would perhaps draw them closer towards the 'experimental' type.

Given the nature of the study I was particularly interested in exploring how religion and spirituality could be located within such views and beliefs

connected with modern science. This next quote from Devon elaborates on how the spiritual, sometimes considered irrational within modern science, is being justified in a rational scientific way. It seems that the two worlds of emotion (feeling, intuition) and scientific reasoning (knowledge, data) are being grappled with during the process of understanding nature.

Interviewer: “I mean you mention the word science there, science and technology what's your sort of view on that?”

Devon: “I think there is part of me that likes to have the scientific backup for the feelings, the intuitive [short distraction] spiritual wafy whatever you want to call it.”

Interviewer: “If science reinforces that, you're pleased about that or it's significant?”

Devon: “It makes it more believable for others that don't feel or get that intuitive connection, for example I could say that tree really doesn't want to be felled, it's really happy where it is, not going to take that tree or someone else might say what the fuck are you talking about you wafy Hippie, do you know what I mean like, whereas stick some probes in the ground and do a few little scientific thingys, experiments which can prove that that tree is, it's energetic impulses that it's giving out change when you start a chain saw up next to it, it's been proven, there has been all sorts of experiments that they react to how we are, anger, if we are angry they pick up on it just like animals do, so I think it's good to sort of yeah, almost defend yourself a little bit against sort of people who are totally sceptical.”

Int 10 55:44

These two paradigms or patterns of thought then could be considered to be in synthesis with each other. This particular phenomenon appears similar to the distinction between ‘instrumental causality’ and ‘participation’ which will be discussed in detail within the urban context in Chapter 6 (Hanegraaff, 2003).

Perhaps a solution to this tension can be seen in the way that six community members referred to quantum physics in a manner that seemed to suggest a synchronisation or merging of spirituality and modern science. The writings of Rupert Sheldrake and Bruce Lipton (Lipton, 2006; Sheldrake, 2009; Sheldrake, McKenna, & Abraham, 2001) were referred to as significant in their exploration of spirituality and scientific understandings of the essence of matter.

Gazza: “Being kind of scientific I was an atheist when I was young and I used to get scared to death about dying, all that stuff, but as I have kind of learned more throughout the years and stuff, I just kind of come up with different ideas about how, and yeah like you said* the quantum thing is very interesting.”

Interviewer: “Yeah is this like Bruce Lipton and erm ?”

Gazza: “Oh have you heard of Bruce Lipton.”

Interviewer: “Yeah I've read a little bit of Bruce Lipton.”

Gazza: “I've read some of his books and I have seen a lot of his talks and stuff.”

Interviewer: “This is the merging of science and spirituality isn't it?”

Gazza: “Yeah, that is something I thought about before I bumped into Bruce Lipton or read any of his stuff, someone in town introduced me to his book and I was like, was instantly fascinated by it because it's all from a very similar sort of point of view that I am, I guess, how quantum stuff comes out of the, two sides of things the science and spirituality.” **Int 3 30:24**

*[Note the quantum theme was in fact introduced to the conversation by his partner just before this quote.]

Community members exploring these themes appeared more disposed to rational and scientific ways of explaining the world around them. It appeared that during their childhood experiences they were exposed to a scientific worldview which was still essential. However, after extended periods in nature and experiencing what they commonly termed 'another dimension', scientific understandings alone were seen as insufficient to formulate their worldview, hence their exploration of spirituality and matter. Also notable was the tendency for communal members who define themselves as atheist or agnostic to draw on modern scientific paradigms to define their ethical stance on issues such as genetic modification GM.

Sid: “Sounds like a pretty bad idea, from what I have read, anti GM papers which, it's hard, I don't have the scientific knowledge to, erm, to really be sure that GM is bad, but I have read enough to make me deeply concerned, make me think I don't want to risk this or don't have to.” **Int 15: 30:00** [Although Sid was not a member of Raven Hill or Yosemite, he was a member of a very similar rural 'low-impact' environmental community and so I've included his comment here.]

It appears, generally speaking then, that community members are relating to two major paradigms, seeing no reason why spiritual beliefs or practices can't sit alongside or be incorporated with scientific rationalism.

5.6 Conclusions

The general description of community life in this Chapter has highlighted the prominence and relevant unity of values, lifestyle and culture, a major theme for the following chapters. Even so tensions were noted in relation to the food eaten within the community, work practices and spiritual beliefs. The tensions concisely outlined here will be expanded upon to form significant material in Chapters 7 to 9. My exploration of religion and spirituality in this Chapter has identified foundational material which will be useful in making sense of the diverse range of spiritual traditions operating within environmental communities. I consider there exists three main distinct groupings, 'eclectic', 'Eco-Pagan' and 'core shamanism (developing)'.

As I outlined above the more 'eclectic' and esoteric forms of spirituality can clearly be recognised and although not dominant in numbers they are nonetheless still significant in communal life. I consider this grouping to have the most torrid time in relation to spirituality within the community. Their orientation towards the authority of the individual can at times conflict with group or collective identities. Also uncomfortable are the sometimes acrimonious community discourses 'wafy Hippie bullshit' which are in some respects directed at the esoteric, cosmic nature of some forms of their spirituality. Such eclectics would have a much easier life within the eco-villages network in contexts such as Findhorn and Dharmana where the eclectic esoteric forms of spirituality are fully accepted (Conrad, 1995; Dawson, 2006; Jackson & Svensson, 2002). This critical discourse towards the esoteric element of the 'eclectic' was in fact the most dominant community discourse surrounding spirituality, hence one which I will examine closely in Chapter 7. The eclectic then manages to survive by interacting with the local towns and summer festivals which are in turn greatly influenced by the cultic milieu. Essentially then eclectics have most of their need for communal ceremony met away from site (Int 5 31:28).

The next grouping is the Eco-pagan, clearly the most dominant in numbers within the community and although seemingly diverse in the expression of their spirituality are clustered around a 'core pagan doxa'. The Eco-pagan grouping is in reality very similar to the forms of paganism found within the 1990s road protest described in Chapter 4. However as I have identified

there has been a significant amount of spiritual development in that many community members recounted a narrative which found their desire for ritual and ceremony decreased, giving way to a more 'integrated' approach to spirituality and ritual. This was, as I have outlined, essentially dependent on a rural context and direct connection with nature. Also comfortably accommodated within this grouping are those who have a sense of spirituality within nature connection but who nonetheless lean quite heavily on scientific, rationalistic worldviews, hence the fusion of spirituality and quantum physics. What is clearly absent from the Eco-pagan grouping is the cosmic esoteric forms of spirituality which are perceived as 'totally out there' (Int 7 15:44) and considered excessively irrational. The Eco-pagan grouping then in many ways forms the status quo, the predominant visible expression of spirituality within both Raven Hill and Yosemite.

The final grouping is that of 'core shamanism (developing)', which in many ways can be considered as being a tradition of contemporary paganism (Wallis, 2003). Within both Raven Hill and Yosemite members have been adopting a more focused approach towards core shamanism, developing it and moving it from a vernacular, eclectic foundation to a traditional one. This development can be identified in the organisational structure of AOMM which is preoccupying the energies of these community members. This on-going development also forms a strong community discourse which at Raven Hill is potentially threatening the dominance of the Eco-pagan tradition. I will also be exploring this important community discourse in Chapter 8, explaining in detail the movement from a spiritual Eco-pagan, eclectic focus to a structured religious tradition. I will now consider an urban context by examining life at Brecon.

~ Chapter 6 ~ Environmental Community: Urban Context

6.1 Introduction

In a similar manner to Chapter 5 I will describe here the geographical setting and social life of Brecon, an urban environmental community. I will, towards the end of the chapter, pay particular attention to the religious and spiritual traditions present. However as will become apparent, the urban context exhibits far less overt forms of religion and spirituality, consequently this section is comparatively slender in comparison to the one that deals with the rural context. Having outlined the forms of religion and spirituality practiced by the individual community members, I will go on to define the spatial and social location of these forms, comparing this with the rural context. Furthermore I will examine the conundrum surrounding the fact that some community members, although not holding to any religious or spiritual beliefs, willingly take part in solstice rituals connected with the wider EDA movement.

Before I began this study I was aware of the tensions surrounding religion and spirituality within urban contexts, but I had in many respects underestimated the strength of those feelings for many community members. In comparison to negotiating access to the rural communities there did seem to be a lot more questioning of my research aims and how it would apply to their particular community. Indeed, as will soon become apparent, some community members did not believe that there were any forms of religion or spirituality to study within their community. To counter the imbalance of only one community in the urban I have relied particularly on two triangulation interviews given by Lola and Tom, who both have extensive experience of environmental communities more generally. Their input here relates to their current involvement with an urban community which I will refer to as Green Terrace. Additionally, I bring to bear my personal experience on the fringes of three urban environmental communities over the last ten years. I mention this fact as it has inevitably influenced the themes I have chosen to comment on. In keeping with Chapter 5 I have chosen to use anonymised titles for the environmental communities and for personal names of the community members to ensure a degree of privacy in relation to personal beliefs.

6.2 Brecon

6.2.1 Architecture

Brecon is a fairly typical example of an urban environmental community. It is situated on the edge of a major UK city, just a short walk from the city centre. As is the case with many UK cities, such neighbourhoods have a variety of ethnic cultures. The local area has been categorised as suffering from social deprivation/multiple deprivations.⁶⁹ It is not uncommon for political activists to choose to live in such neighbourhoods, frequently advocating on behalf of those most adversely affected by government policies or socio-economic factors (Barton, 2000, p. 155; Rigby, 1974a, p. 122).

The Brecon cooperative occupies two large residential properties adjacent to one another; there are eight bedroom spaces in all and at the time of the interviews seven adult members resided there between the ages of 25 and 38. Each community member has a large bedroom space for their exclusive personal use. There are two kitchens, one small and one much larger which gets the most use for general and communal cooking. The kitchen area is open plan, combining a dining space and lounge type area. There is also another lounge space which is smaller and has a TV within it. There is a large meeting room and library space and at the time of my visit it was mainly used for table tennis and other games. This space is particularly important when the community throws a party, a regular event which I will describe in detail below. Three large bathroom with WCs are also shared by all the community members. In recent years significant improvements have been made to the two buildings, including environmental improvements such as high-tech insulation and a solar panel roof. Heating is provided by a gas boiler; however this is now significantly supplemented by a wood-burning stove, with the wood being sourced locally from environmental projects. With the two properties being adjacent to each other the rear garden areas form a large space in which vegetables and herbs are grown. This is described as an organic garden and there is considerable care put into what methods are employed to cultivate this space. In addition to this, the members of the co-op tend two other council-owned allotments. Along with the organic garden

⁶⁹ The Guardian Newspaper See References for Websites below.

this amounts to a considerable area of land on which to grow food for the co-operative.

6.2.2 Local Towns and Economy, Work Arrangements

As I have already mentioned briefly, Brecon is set in a neighbourhood suffering from social deprivation. To varying degrees community members engage with the issues of the local area and the people living there. This includes for example the issue of destitution within the UK asylum system; some members are involved in associated political campaigns such as 'no one is illegal'.⁷⁰ Yet other members also provide practical support by helping destitute people to squat in empty houses within the area. Their involvement in such political urban issues which are not centrally concerned with the environmental theme can be contrasted with rural contexts, where most political activities were usually focused on the environment, for example the 'the land is ours' (McKay, 1998, p. 174) campaign. Although concerned about the local context, community members did not restrict their social connections or political campaigns to this realm. Most community members from Brecon had friendships and political alliances all around the city. In this respect the urban context was more leaky, offering far more opportunities to gain social contact outside the immediate community group. The diversity of cultures living within the local area was reflected also in the diverse forms of religion practiced. Mosques, Gurdwaras, Hindu temples and African Christian churches complete with their congregations formed part of the local context. However there was little sign that community members engaged with these faith groups, beyond being neighbourly to those they happened to encounter. But as will be discussed later there was considerable involvement by community members with Eastern body practices such as yoga and tai chi; these were accessed both locally and across the city.

The forms of employment that community members chose were remarkably similar to the rural context, the majority being connected with environment and caring roles. The types of employment sought were again not necessarily connected to progressive careers but instead offered worthwhile and rewarding tasks for adequate or low pay. The predominant culture within the community, one which spurns excessive consumption, coupled with the

⁷⁰ 'No One Is Illegal' See References for Websites below.

relatively low rent will certainly have helped community members in seeking job satisfaction over financial reward. There was an active resistance to employment that would be contributing to the damaging aspects of 'the system' commonly deemed responsible for the environmental crisis⁷¹. It was clear that community members with impressive higher education records, who were very able to take on more lucrative careers, were instead choosing employment that did not contradict their strong political beliefs, a feature also noted by Abrams & McCulloch within the 1970s UK commune movement (1976, p. 100). The typical range of employment then spanned: caring roles and educating the developmentally disabled, stewarding urban woodland, tree surgery, university teaching, recycling schemes, cafe work and domestic gardening.

Although many community members worked in these related areas, very few actually worked together or in the same geographical location. This reality, the daily experience of different locations and social contexts, contributed to the more leaky social dynamic observed in the urban context (Rigby, 1974a, p. 123). This phenomenon was heightened further by the multiple relationships that community members had within the wider social movement. As a result, for the occasional visitor, it was not always clear who was part of the co-op and who was not (Int 35 27:44). One of the functions for Brecon in past years was to support direct action protest camps close to their locality. Camp protesters would often come for a respite stay when stressed by the confrontational atmosphere of the protest camp. This was another feature that blurred community boundaries.

One context where community members could work in the same geographical location was the communal work days. These workdays were carried out on a regular basis. However due to the differing work patterns not all members could be present at the same time; usually in such situations members would work on their own at a more convenient time during the week. In a similar fashion to the rural context workdays were referred to as providing a sense of common purpose and community cohesion (Int 31 18:00).

⁷¹ A similar resistance to this has been documented by Christina Ergas within urban eco-villages of North America (Ergas, 2010, p. 49).

6.2.3 Meetings and Legal Structures

Brecon is a not-for-profit autonomous housing cooperative, a common legal structure for urban environmental communities in general. The buildings and garden areas are therefore controlled and managed by the members as a whole. Brecon has adopted the consensus decision-making process whereby if any single member does not approve of the proposal put forward they can, on their own, block the proposal. In contrast to the rural context Brecon does not have a particular meeting focused on emotions. Business meetings happen at Brecon usually every three weeks or more frequently when an inordinate amount of decisions need to be made. Since Brecon does not separate the personal (emotions) and the process (business) any emotional responses from community members would need to be expressed within general business meeting or alternatively on a one-to-one basis at another time.

6.2.4 Family Structures, Children, Schooling

At Brecon there were no families and it had been approximately five or six years since a family had lived within the cooperative. Members who have had children have tended to move out, this perhaps related to the forms of political activism taking place and the interaction with a movement culture which would not be particularly conducive to family life. Consequently as a group of 20 - 30 something's the members have formed their own type of pseudo-family. The quality and depth of relationships at Brecon was tangible; they spent considerable amounts of time cooking, eating and relaxing together. Additionally they ventured out into the countryside together, partook in recreational activities together such as rock climbing and canoeing, went on beach holidays together and as previously mentioned worked together on cooperative work days. All this contributed to a pseudo-family feel. In this respect my comments about the rural context regarding the 1970s communes movement and its response to the alienating effects of modernity, the search for a new family, could perhaps also be relevant here (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 122). This aspect was however disrupted somewhat by the higher turnover rate of community members when compared to the more consistent rural context. Only one couple at Brecon had a partner relationship, this being heterosexual.

6.2.5 Socio Economic Groupings, Ethnicity, Education and Mobility

In general the socio economic groupings within Brecon were mixed and in this respect slightly different from the social movement from which it grew (Plows, 2002, p. 49). Slightly more community members emanated from the middle classes with the remaining members proudly identifying as working class.⁷² I detected no particular prejudice between community members along class lines. Some middle-class community members were conscious of their privileged upbringing and acknowledged an awareness of how this in turn influenced their worldview (Int 31 12:18). These aspects appeared to match the phenomenon of post-materialism in the Western context more generally (Doherty, 2002, p. 71; Kriesi, 1995, p. XX; Rigby, 1974a, p. 189).

Ethnicity within the urban context generally reflected the wider social movement⁷³ although certainly not the local geographical area which contained many different ethnic groups. Most community members at both Brecon and Green Terrace came from European ethnic groups describing themselves as white or Caucasian. The exception was one community member who identified as Irish Gypsy traveller. In this respect ethnic diversity was limited, posing no particular challenges to daily life.

Almost all community members in the urban context had gone to university, further education or dropped out of education to join the 1990s road protests. Of the members who did not experience university life it would be fair to say most were from a working-class background. In a similar fashion to the rural context levels of education and general knowledge were extremely high. This was again due in part to the experiences of travelling abroad (some on gap years) which most members had undertaken. The experiences of travelling came up frequently within the interviews, usually being quoted as another context with which to compare and reflect on the UK and Western society.

⁷² These broad class distinctions were arrived at by assessing the further education of those interviewed along with their parents' economic situation. Since this information came informally during the interview process it should be considered approximate.

⁷³ *Do or Die* Volume 10, (pages 236-242) See References for Websites below.

6.2.6 Food

Almost every evening at Brecon an evening meal was cooked for the whole community. Most community members would sit around a large dining table and eat together, occasionally with a visiting friend connected to the wider social movement. If community members could not make the scheduled meal time they would eat later when the other community members were relaxing in the adjacent (Open Plan) lounge space. The food cooked was a mixture of vegan and vegetarian, some community members openly declared they were meat eaters however out of respect for the other community members they were willing to forego their meat eating habits during the evening communal meal. Similarly some of the community members who were vegan relaxed their stance and accepted some vegetarian meals. The consumption of vegetarian food then at the communal meals seemed to reflect a pragmatic middle ground (Int 33 42:20). There was an intentional use of healthy, ethical food and local grown vegetables. Cooking was voluntary and the dishes cooked by the community members seemed to be an opportunity for personal expression, a setting where members shared taste sensations with the rest of the community. All of the above was similar to the rural context; however it could be noted that the number of communal meals organised each week was considerably higher in the urban context. Some community members from Brecon considered the communal meal a very important glue that held them together (33 40:20). I will explore further the cohesive bonding aspects of the communal meal in Chapter 9. Herbal medicines and remedies were the first port of call when community members were not feeling well at Brecon, although like the rural context modern pharmaceutical medicine was taken when community members were more seriously ill.

6.2.7 Political Ideologies

Considering the overlap with religious concepts and the historical role political ideology has played in the communes movement generally (Hardy, 1979), I asked the community members about their particular political beliefs. Starkly different to the rural context, many community members associated their environmentalism with political ideology. Community members spoke of their political environmentalism and their green politics. Within this broad definition some community members wanted to be

identified specifically as being 'activists'. The next frequent political ideology, in keeping with the rural context, was anarchism. The particular strand expressed within the urban context closely related to the communal form which I discussed in Chapter 4.8 (Eckersley, 1992, p. 146). Again the consensus decision-making process discussed earlier would be one practical expression of this anarchist ideology. Socialist or left wing politics were also frequently mentioned throughout the interviews, although it tended to be the more radical forms. Two members from the Brecon community expressed beliefs around 'Anarcho Primitivism', though they did not use the precise title. The ideal within an Anarcho Primitivism is not located so much in the verbalised or written form but within the lifestyle and customs of indigenous people around the globe, with these cultures being valorised as environmentally sustainable.

Jed: "Very very few people live in this harmonious way [close to nature], the only people that do are the tribes people of the world who are also being hunted by the rest of humankind because again they seem somehow afraid of the way that they live, er, because it is deemed to be barbaric or archaic or whatever." **Int 31 101:03**
[brackets mine]

This form of anarchism is sometimes loosely associated with spirituality; however again I stress the term 'spiritual' was not used (Gordon, 2008, p. 110). As will be seen in the section below on science and technology, Jed's ideological beliefs here influence opinions surrounding modern medicine. Finally a number of community members expressed how they had moved on from their activism and direct action tactics (Int 34 33:44). Political activism had brought them together but now that was not what held them together.

Toby: "Back then ...[incoherent speech] that is what I would have said brought us together [political activism], now this is not what unites people." **Int 33 28:50** [brackets mine]

Overall it seemed that community members had drifted away from bonding around political ideology towards a more pragmatic form of living that focused on practices and culture (Int 30 32:25), this focus and the bonding effect it provides is a feature that I will elaborate upon further in Chapter 9. If this aspect is reflective of a more general trend within environmental communities it could perhaps explain a puzzling difference between what I

have uncovered in my research, namely a growing ambivalence towards political ideology, and what David Pepper outlined in his 1991 study where he concluded that political ideology particularly from the left of politics would play an important role as the green communities progressed (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, pp. 218-219).

6.2.8 Party Celebrations, Recreational Drugs and Entheogens

In a similar fashion to the rural communities, Brecon organised party celebrations. They are usually focused around a members' birthday or to celebrate a significant anniversary within the community. The celebrations involve between 8 and 80 people, mainly adults. Only a few of the partygoers are family relations, this being significantly different to the rural celebrations. Brecon has a regular autumn party to which community members dedicated significant time, energy and resources. They essentially acted as hosts for the majority of people who attend which are part of the associated movement and local alternative political movements. Amplified recorded music is played and the DJs selecting the music are rotated, usually between members of the community or close friends. Sessions are scheduled for 30 or 60 minute periods, this then ensures a variety of music and an opportunity for personal expression in the music chosen. Dancing also forms a significant part of the celebrations, especially early on in the celebrations when a faster beat of music is played from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. This then usually gives way to more restful, 'chill-out' phase where slower music takes over. After the quieter period it is quite normal to begin the cycle again, with parties lasting 2-3 days and nights. This type of celebration, namely 'partying hard', has an element of work and endurance about it as well as celebration (Mills, 1973, p. 21), a factor I will comment on in Chapter 7. A distinction can be drawn between urban and rural in that in the urban context the celebrations were predominantly scheduled, I came across no instances of 'ad hoc' or 'impromptu' celebrations, such as took place in the rural context. I consider this is mainly due to the fact that most community members worked at various locations around the city away from the community meaning that such impromptu gatherings were simply not possible. Having acknowledged that practical difficulty I still maintain that the urban community members are much more comfortable with scheduled celebration, an ethos of 'work hard' and then 'party hard' which, as I have highlighted in Chapter 5, is a pattern that can be disrupted by the impromptu party.

Recreational drugs are also a significant feature of the urban party scene. Having discovered the significant part that drugs and entheogens played in the rural context I listened carefully to pick up on any comments made within the interviews. On the whole, the drug taking experience was not considered particularly important, certainly not in relation to discovering an otherworldly realm. That said, community members such as Jed in this quotation indicated they were well aware of the connection between hallucinogens and spirituality.

Jed: “and even drug taking, in fact yeah drug taking, people that are into exploration of out-of-body experiences and that, can all fall into the realm of spirituality, taking hallucinogenics and stuff like that, erm, is yeah, is related strongly to spirituality.” **Int 31 42:09**

It may be worth noting Jed’s choice of language here, the ‘out of body experiences’ emphasising his external focus; whereas Theo’s focus quoted in the previously in Chapter 5.3.8 was on understanding a deeper level of ‘who I am’ (Int 5 7:49). Other community members also indicated that for them hallucinogenic drugs created a spiritual experience.

Tyrone: “I think for me some of my most spiritual moments have definitely been involved with hallucinogenic drugs.”

Interviewer: “and has that carried on in a sense, have you explored that outside of drugs or has it just remained....”

Tyrone: “I suppose, maybe it informs my thinking I think, [incoherent speech] yeah incorporating experiences into my, just overall worldview, so an experience on a hallucinogenic drug I won’t, necessarily say is more valid or less valid than an experience when my mind is unaltered, so an experience on mushrooms I may well sort of incorporate into just how I perceive the world as much as I might anything else.” **Int 35 30:08**

It is evident here that the spiritual experience induced by the drug is significant to Tyrone. However, he does not elevate or privilege such experiences above other every day mundane experiences. He seems to be incorporating his drug induced experience alongside his more sober experiences to form an integrated worldview.

Urban community members tended to drink alcohol and take recreational drugs almost entirely in social groups. There was no evidence to suggest lone experimentation with entheogens for spiritual purposes as occasionally takes place in shamanism (Wallis, 2003). In fact it was emphasised to me by

Tyrone that one of the problems with general drug taking in the West is that it is too individually focused, not usually structured with a group guide or group element (field notes Brecon autumn 2011). The group aspect of drug taking in the urban communities could also be evidenced in the consumption of truffles and cakes which contain either cannabis or hallucinogenic drugs. The emphasis in this instance is placed on all taking the same or similar amounts of the drug and having a common altered state experience, communal experience. An element of trust in the cook is also evident in either personal relationship or via the trust of others in the group. Throughout the interviews I did detect some tensions connected with drug addictions. Brecon had a phase of being an 'informal mental health drop-in' (Int 35 25:59) engaging with movement participants outside the community who had drug-related social problems. However, difficulties associated with this situation appear to have been resolved, and lessons learned.

The differences identified here may indicate that drugs are being employed by community members for different purposes. In the urban context alcohol and marijuana are being taken for relaxation after hard spells of work. Less frequently, hallucinogenic are taken for group bonding experiences, journeying through the party together. Stimulants may also be taken to enable the sustained effort needed for 'partying hard'. Drug experiences are not generally understood as offering glimpses into an 'otherworldly' realm which is more significant or real. In the rural context recreational drugs are also taken occasionally for group bonding purposes and relaxation but also entheogens are taken, occasionally alone, to experience altered states of consciousness, for understanding or experiencing an otherworldly, spiritual realm and enhancing interaction with nature.

6.3 Religion and Spirituality

Having explored in a general way daily life at Brecon I will now turn to my central theme - religion and spirituality. As with the rural context I will begin by commenting on the influence of Christian beliefs and practices as many community members were exposed to such influences in the early family life or the childhood education. Although I did not specifically raise the subject

within the interviews it inevitably came up in discussions.⁷⁴ Organised religion generally and Christianity in particular was spoken about in negative terms, Tyrone is here describing the nuns who were teaching at his Catholic primary school.

Tyrone: “I was able to sort of just compartmentalise it, and say these people are just mental, I rejected it very early..... I think it was around the age of 10 that I decided this bearded God they were telling me about didn't exist.” **Int 35 41:50**

He also added later a short statement that perhaps explains some of the negative attitudes surrounding religion.

Tyrone: “Yeah I think being an, being an urban [pause] semi punkie at times, sort of, quite a lot of identity around rejection of mainstream religion.” **Int 35 33:00**

In these two quotes, from Toby and Tess, the progression in their teenage years from Christianity to other spiritual traditions can be detected.

Toby: “Growing up as a teenager is partly about rebelling against my parents, that kind of rebellion you know I was brought up [interrupted].”

Interviewer: “Did your parents have faith tradition?”

Toby: “Yeah I was brought up as Christian, well my mom was Christian, I was brought up going to church, so when I was 15, you know, I gave up all that as part of rebelling against everything else, and I was quite interested in like, sort of this, new kind of paganism movement, earth spiritualities and things, I have sort of looked into that and I wanted to, you know, I wanted to get to find out about that kind of thing, but erm [pause]. It's not really important to me now, any kind of, at various times people have tried to invent, tried to create

⁷⁴ While not actually vocalised I did get the impression that some members who were aware of my own Christian tradition were holding back their true views on some of these matters, a feature also present in the rural context.

these structures of, you know, paganism Wiccan things, people are always trying to invent ceremonies.” **Int 33 55:50**

Tess: “and then I kind of realised that even though I was getting a lot out of the prayer, and that was putting me in a really good place, there was a lot of things about Christianity which was so unaccepting and so cold to my situation, it didn't really help and then I kind of quit, there was quite a few questions that couldn't be answered that I just thought, started to see quite a few holes in the whole thing about religion, yeah I kind of started to see the similarities between prayer and meditation.” **Int 32 52:02**

Tess eventually went on to explore many alternative spiritual traditions, these being similar in nature to the eclectic form discussed in Chapter 5. Interestingly, Ben, who did not experience such parental influences, was more positive about the role of religion within social movements generally even if he himself could never envisage being religious.

Ben: “Historically it's been absolutely vital, and this is one of the reasons I've said, I sort of parted from my parents and differed from their views in some ways, a lot of religious people who I know are great people who have done great things with their lives and if you look at the civil rights movement religion was absolutely vital to it, erm, look at Gandhi and his anticolonial movement,... I think that actually religion has a vital part to play and if, I like to think that if a big social movement is to have a big impact over the next few years one of the ways it might do that is by forming alliances with religious groups.... I will never be religious but I think that it can play a very important part, yeah.” **Int 30 108:06**

Ben's accommodating pluralistic approach to religion in particular was certainly the exception within the community members generally. That said a level of tolerance existed within environmental communities, both urban and rural, for the 'token' Christian. Sid, a member of a similar community to Raven Hill and Yosemite, explained that his community had a long-standing member who identified as a radical Christian (Int 15 30:55).⁷⁵ Also at Green

⁷⁵ Radical Christian in the sense that he held significantly different beliefs and practices to mainstream churches in the UK, a kind that

Terrace Lola identified as a Quaker of the 'Christo-centric' tradition. These singular examples could in no way be considered a threat to the general dominant resistance to organised religion in both rural and urban contexts. In this next quote Lola elaborates on some of the sensitivities surrounding religion in urban community life. She was asked what role religion and spirituality played at Green Terrace.

Lola: "In terms of spirituality and religion? Okay, absolutely none whatsoever [laughter]."

Interviewer: "Is there a tolerance of difference?"

Lola: "Well it's interesting, when we were thinking about moving in [Simon] who we live with erm, said to me that you need to know that I think anyone who believes in God is a bit bonkers, and he said I just need you to know that before you decide to live in a house with me, and I said that's fine, I can cope with, you know, it's not going to be an on-going daily issue, you know, you can think I'm a bit bonkers, I will think you're a bit bonkers for another reason that's fine, so yes I mean there is no one here who would define themselves as religious, I'm the only person that has any spiritual practice. Well I say that, there are people here that have flirted with meditation."

Interviewer: "Or yoga?"

Lola: "Yeah probably yoga as well. But most certainly [Simon and Mel] are probably explicitly anti-religion, but not in a way that I find threatening or whatever." **Int 36 00:06**

Lola's comment about meditation here leads me onto what types of spiritual beliefs and practices are present in urban environmental communities. But before that I need to briefly outline what most of those interviewed considered the differences were between religion and spirituality. Frequently mentioned was the individual nature of spirituality and this was contrasted with the group dynamic of religion.

Lola: "Yes I know it's totally self-defined, absolutely, so for me the difference, religion is about, organised religion, and spirituality is

amalgamated Christian and esoteric spirituality, which was expressed in a non-congregational form.

about personal spirituality, so for me it's the difference between group organisation and personal stuff." **Int 36 10:01**

But also mentioned were the guidelines and rules perceived as inherent within religion.

Jed: "Religion, may be is more kind of following a certain set of guidelines, believing in those guidelines and worship, and then the other, spirituality is I suppose, I associate spirituality as more of a Hippie word I suppose, where it's like could be an awareness of energies and other stuff like that." **Int 31 40:01**

Tess here extends her suspicions of religious groups to spiritual groups and perhaps perceives power dynamics as surrounding the role of leader or guru.

Tess: "I'm always a bit cautious of groups, in terms of spiritual, there seems to be a lot of very, er, [pause] don't know I am kind of wary I think of the Guru, you know, the spiritual leader, and that, in the same way of religion I suppose, within, well within communities of religion there is danger of that, somebody, or somebody is kind of more ruled by their Ego than their actual true spiritual being." **Int 32 103:45**

So if, as perhaps could be expected, the presence of religion was largely absent, what about spirituality? According to some community members that too was largely absent.

Tyrone: "I would say the majority of the people who I have lived with at [Brecon] wouldn't have much in the way of spirituality."
Int 35 34:41

Wilma: "I've got a bad, negative reaction to the word [religion], erm, and I am not quite sure why, but it, you know, when you have a sort of reaction, a resonance, a reactionary response, that I will think about and then eradicate, but the basic, I don't think very spiritually... And I don't like thinking of the bigger picture, and I don't believe in God, and I don't believe in life after death, and I don't believe in spirits, and I don't believe in reincarnation, and I don't believe in, I don't know I am very sort of like, you're born and then you die and then you degrade and that's it... I want to live in the here and now, and I found myself when I start thinking about wider stuff is when I start getting a bit

depressed, so I find I am safer and happier to involve myself in reality.” **Int 34 20:40**

Jan: “I think we probably would define ourselves as atheists yeah.”
Int 29 117:05

In response to Jan’s clear statement here I asked if members adopting spiritual beliefs or practices would be accepted within the co-op.

Jan :“I wouldn't say it wouldn't be accepted if someone were to, you know, hold a belief, you know, say they believed in ghosts whatever, I don't think the person would be mocked if they were serious about it, there might be some teasing about it [laughs].”

Interviewer: “But generally people are not explicit at all?”

Jan: “No people don't express any ideas like that.” **Int 29 117:05**

This perception then if accepted may have deterred me investigating further. However throughout the interviews it appeared that some spiritual beliefs and practices did exist. Whilst interviewing Tess I asked if she could label her spirituality.

Tess: “I don't know you see that's it, I don't know, I don't know myself, I am on a, I feel like I am just beginning my journey to understanding a bit more, becoming more mindful, like erm I suppose a kind of, er, a more solitary witchcraft in a way, you know, a lot of the kind of solitary witch is very much, erm but then even that is dabbling with [pause].”

Interviewer: “Is this wiccan or pagan?”

Tess: “No not Wicca, it's more pagan than Wiccan, because Wicca is very much more the coven and the ritual and the, again the big group, where you always got somebody who's, potentially their egos are more important than... But Marian Green⁷⁶ is a pagan witch who talks about solitary witchcraft and there is aspects of it I am, I have always been very drawn to and interested in, enquiring like, the kind of meditative things you do in a place to remember your ancestors, and

⁷⁶ Marian Green a practitioner of Western magic and witchcraft. Tess may be referring here to her book ‘*A Witch Alone*’ (Green, 1991).

think back to the geographical history of that place where you are....
and also the rituals, the rituals where you do something that is
changing the way you think about something or changing the way you
behave towards something in a positive way.” **Int 32 1:10:10**

From the quote above and the author mentioned the common features of
'contemporary paganism' as outlined in Chapter 4 are apparent. At the same
time however a sense of spiritual progression is also discernable, perceived
as a journey to understanding, this seems to result in Tess being a little
unsure about how to label her spiritual tradition. That said I would certainly
say Tess has a spiritual or meta-empirical worldview evidenced in her beliefs
of life after death, where the mind carries on outside the body, this
seemingly influenced by classic spiritualism. Another community member
who identified with the pagan label, albeit hesitantly, was Ben. Here he was
asked here if he would appreciate paganism as a religious tradition.

Ben: “Yeah I mean, I must admit I know criminally little about it partly
because religious education is so shit in schools ahem, [laughs] but
from what I know of it it's a religious tradition that honours nature a lot
so it's something that chimes with me a lot, more than the mass of
religions out there that, don't do that, that aren't based around nature,
so it's something that makes, in my very little knowledge of it, makes
more sense to me than Christianity say.”

Interviewer: “In the sense of connection with nature?”

Ben: “Yes” **Int 30 41:31**

Ben also mentioned how he felt particularly spiritual in nature, interacting
with nature in both rural and urban landscapes. I enquired further to see if he
would identify more explicitly with a structured religious or political belief.

Ben: “I'm not sure I think it's [structured belief] probably amorphous
as my spirituality really, and like, you know, pretty much everybody
here does jobs that are either environmentally or social really good
and important and I think that that kind of, the, the, the will to a better
world in its climate sense, but also in a social sense, it's what
motivates everybody here, to me that's quite a spiritual thing, you
know, and yeah I don't know if anybody has a more structured
spirituality I just know that they are all pretty spiritual, or mostly yeah.”

Int 30 44:20 [brackets mine]

As can be detected from this quotation Ben is certainly comfortable using the
term spiritual in a way that many other urban community members felt

unable. However there is hesitancy about more structured explicit understanding of what that spirituality is; what is preferred is the focus of practices, day-to-day actions that all community members are involved in. Could these practices therefore be considered as bonding, perhaps mundane but no less important? I will explore such notions in Chapter 9 where I elaborate on what bonds community together. In the way Ben expresses his spirituality and the way he loosely identifies with pagan concepts it would not be too far from the mark to identify him as a nominal Pagan.

This form of vagueness about matters spiritual could be identified within other community members albeit in even weaker and less explicit forms. It was as if when pushed they would confirm that they had a spiritual or significant feeling when interacting with nature and that experience could not be satisfactorily explained by scientific rationalism (Int 33 53:06). In relation to my earlier distinction of religion and spirituality in Chapter 1, what I am describing here is clearly spiritual, based centrally upon personal experience, lacking any organisational form. It may also be helpful here to refer back to Alex Plows' 'continuum' with its identification of a spirituality that is in fact somewhere between 'spiritual' and 'consciously secular' (Chapter 4.5).

Lola quoted above introduced us to the theme of meditation and yoga, which regularly came up in the interviews. I have noted the influence of the Eastern religious traditions on the wider social movement in Chapter 2 however what is particularly relevant in the urban context is the association of Taoism with anarchism (Marshall, 1992, p. 53), so then in many respects such influences here should not come as a surprise. That said what forms can be detected? Ben here discusses his beliefs around the physical practice of Kung Fu within a local group which meets almost every Tuesday night.

Ben: "I definitely have a strong sense of spirituality, an example that may sum up my attitude to that sort of thing is Tai Chi right, now I don't believe in, I have done a lot of Tai Chi, cos I do Kung Fu, my teacher teaches it. I don't believe in Chi in the same way the ancient Chinese philosophy would have it, I think there is a physiological explanation for it, but it's still a spiritual thing, if you see what I mean, and I kind of think that we are probably all [pause], God it's difficult isn't it your capacity for language disappears completely when you start thinking about this [laughs]." **Int 30 51:14**

The practice then of Western, secular forms of martial arts are particularly relevant here. Ben was not the only urban community member who partook in physical body practices associated with Eastern religious traditions. Taking martial arts and yoga together I would say almost half the members interviewed mentioned such practices. The meditative aspects of body practice were also mentioned however it seemed that this meditation did not necessarily relate to beliefs. Here Wilma, who was quoted earlier expressing precisely what she did not believe in, describes the practice of yoga.

Wilma: “Yoga I really love it.”

Interviewer: “Does it stop at just the physical thing or do you meditate as well?”

Wilma: “I haven’t learnt how to meditate yet, it’s bloody hard-core, I would like to be able to, but no it’s a [pause].”

Interviewer: “Practical exercise? ”

Wilma: “No it’s more than that definitely, it’s just wonderful for you, it’s an amazing experience, I feel very lucky to know it, I think its life changing.”

Interviewer: “Connecting with your body?”

Wilma: “Yeah and it is just amazing the breathing that you learn, how you can have such a blocked nose but yet suddenly you can just, your mouth closes and you breath so clearly and it all comes from here [pointing to the centre of her body] and you feel like you’re filling yourself full of goodness and your brain stops for the first time ever when you first do it and it’s wonderful, absolutely wonderful, I am dead lucky to know it and I won’t ever stop doing it, I think I am very privileged to have it in my life and I think it will save me a lot and I think the whole world should have it because it’s amazing for you, for your mind and body, but they are one !” **Int 34 36:00**

I extend this quote from Wilma to elaborate just how passionate she was about her yoga practice. Although resistant to labelled religion and spirituality she does seem open to learning meditative practices. It was interesting that she spoke about the physical effects of her practice, on her breathing and blocked nose etc. Earlier in the interview I would have assumed Wilma was resistant to any form of meta-empirical beliefs however her description of yoga here seemed to have a religious like intensity in that it was; edifying “filling yourself with goodness”; ecstatic “wonderful absolutely

wonderful”; committed: “I won't ever stop doing it”; thankful “I am very privileged to have it in my life”; saving: “it will save me a lot I think”; evangelistic “I think the whole world should have it”.

Given her passion and the religious like language with which she speaks about her yoga could it be understood as a spiritual practice? Albeit limited in respect to beliefs. It could perhaps be categorised this way if Paul Heelas's definition is employed, namely 'Subjective-Life forms of the sacred' (2005, p. 6), which includes cultural and practice-specific expectations, values, meanings and truth (2007, p. 5). Conversely other definitions would not categorise Wilma's yoga practice as spiritual given that it expresses no 'meta empirical' element (Hanegraaff, 1999, p. 147). I would certainly conclude for community members like Wilma and Ben a simple and clear categorisation as either spiritual or secular/atheist would be problematic. This uncertainty or ambiguity could perhaps explain Lola's comment quoted above where she paused to state that 'some have flirted with meditation' (Int 36 00:06).

In a similar fashion to the rural communities I adopted a substantive approach to uncover the individual community members' spiritual beliefs not relying on explicit labels. This was not as straightforward or consistent as the rural context due to the atheist and non-religious stances taken by some community members which made aspects of my enquiries irrelevant. As may have been expected concepts of deity were largely absent with the exception of Lola who maintained a nonconformist Quaker tradition. Where some spiritual belief existed it was described as an impersonal force, spirit or Chi (Int 30 52:30). When asked where the spirit resided near or far, immanence or transcendence, immanence was dominant however some described both as significant (Int 32 1: 27:00). And how certain were the urban community members about their beliefs? Most members preferred to remain provisional in relation to beliefs both spiritual and political (Int 33 1: 25:09). Ben however replied provisional generally but described there was an 'element of what is hard and fast' which he described as an essence and will to do good, this he said has never really changed (Int 30 1:20:21).

And finally to death. As may have been predicted the majority of the community members considered death the end for themselves with no notions of continuance either in the afterlife or spirit world or mystic consciousness. Tess and Lola were the only community members expressing a different view. Lola expressed a belief in reincarnation, seemingly divergent from many orthodox Christians, where the human soul

lives on and inhabits another human life and within this concept there is an element of choice as to which body is inhabited (Int 36 20:17). Tess indicated she was not certain about what happened but had some vague theories which related to the concept of timelessness and dreaming, where something, not sure what, perhaps the mind, lived on (Int 32 1: 29:00).

6.3.1 Spatial and Social Location of Religion and Spirituality

Before going on to discuss other areas related to religion and spirituality I feel it necessary here to comment on an apparent contradiction or misperception surrounding the presence of religion and spirituality at Brecon. My interest here is to specifically map the explicit expressions relating to religion and spirituality within environmental communities by analysing what community members stated in their interviews.⁷⁷ I will employ the concept of realms (inner, personal, social and public) to identify the presence of religion and spirituality. These realms have been defined to elaborate on this particular context and I make no wider associations to other contexts or concepts beyond the study. Focussing on the apparent discrepancies and mapping the place (geographical and social) of community members' religious and spiritual expressions will assist me in identifying any implicit social paradigms.

Within the rural context I outlined the degree of ambiguity surrounding the knowledge about other community members' spiritual practices. There was however no doubt that some spiritual beliefs existed in most of the members' world-view even if they were not clearly or explicitly understood by the other members. Within the urban context there seemed to be, for some community members, a belief or perception that there were not any religious or spiritual beliefs (Int 29 117:05). As the interviews progressed it became apparent that this belief or perception could not be taken as accurate as some community members described clear spiritual practices and beliefs. What is interesting to note from this contradiction or misperception is that it would appear, at the community level, such spiritual beliefs (different from religious beliefs which are fair game for criticism) are not openly discussed (Int 30 49:40) or are discussed in a mildly critical way. The result being that

⁷⁷ This particular approach to studying religion has been advocated by Kim Knott in 'The Location of Religion' (2005, p. 233).

community member's with spiritual beliefs and practices keep it to themselves within the 'inner realm', a term I will elaborate on below. Tess here is reflecting on the role of spirituality within Brecon and concludes that there is none but then goes on to state.

Tess: "There are certain people here who I just won't talk to about spirituality because it would make them angry and it's private, it's personal. There are some people here that I do talk to cos I know that they are on a similar mission within themselves, but they also have really negative opinions of religion, that bothers me." **Int 32 1:08:02**

I would suspect that such members in a less critical community environment would be more expressive about their spiritual tradition(s), thereby encompassing both the 'inner realm' and the 'personal realm'. What do I mean when I use the term 'inner realm' and 'personal realm'? I define the inner realm as a person's inner thoughts and emotional life, this includes both the conscious and subconscious and is inextricably connected with body sensations. This may also be termed their core being or inner-life, which is often related to spirituality in particular (P. Heelas, 2007, p. 2). Physically it can be perceived as below the skin of the body, within the mind and emotions of an individual person. Within this realm, thoughts, beliefs and emotions can be withheld, shared with no other person. Such thoughts beliefs and emotions if significant will inevitably be expressed in a physical form and in the context of spirituality it would seem obvious to talk of rituals. Such rituals although external and observable to others may in fact be kept from the sight of others, indeed such secret rituals were discussed at both Raven Hill, Yosemite and Brecon (Int 32 1:20:04). When an individual is directly asked about spiritual beliefs the person has the option of closing down and not expressing their inner thoughts and beliefs in an explicit way, appearing vague. The quote above from Tess is one example of such closing down in a social setting. The personal realm I define as the immediate geographical environment controlled by the individual or family grouping within the community. In the rural context this relates to the individual bender structures (Chapter 5.3.1) and surrounding space or bedroom space as at Brecon. The individual has greater autonomy over the space in comparison to the shared communal areas. In such a space the individual is free to arrange objects and conduct social relationships with some privacy. Consequently the personal realm can be partly social, that is when the individual(s) influence the norms for social interaction. Given the

individual autonomy of the personal realm it is an obvious environment to express and mirror the inner realm of the individual.

To complete the picture then I need to explain what I mean when I use the term 'social realm' and 'public realm'. The social realm relates to everyday interactions, face-to-face meeting, it would equate quite closely to the *Gemeinschaft* categorisation outlined by Ferdinand Tönnies (1957) which I commented on in Chapter 3. Geographically the social realm can be perceived as those spaces in which these face to face social interactions take place, such encounters indeed transform these spaces radically.⁷⁸ In this context they are the communal spaces and buildings within the community, however they may also be located in public spaces such as the street. The 'public realm' then relates to society at large, beyond the immediate social community, individuals and groups depending on their persuasion may interact with this public realm which would include national bodies, state, government etc. An important distinction here for many community members is that personal one-to-one relationships within this realm are simply not possible. Some community members therefore actively seek to reduce the influence of the public realm whether it be the wider norms of society or the direct intervention within their lives by the state. Again this realm can be related to the categorisation of Ferdinand Tönnies, his *Gesellschaft* form of society (1957). The terms political, institutional, civic and municipal are also often referred to when describing this realm. These realms that I have defined should not necessarily be considered hard and fast categories separate from one another, substantial overlap and dynamic interaction exists between them, in this sense they should be considered approximate indicators. Indeed such interaction allows for a degree of ambiguity, this being referred to regularly within the interviews. Influence and interaction between the inner, personal and social realms are prevalent within communal life as a greater interaction is possible when compared to separate households in mainstream culture. It is therefore more likely that a community member's inner beliefs and practices might influence others and lead to collaboration and communion. This form of collaboration therefore would exert an influence within the social sphere which could in many ways be considered a vernacular form of religion. This is a phenomenon which I

⁷⁸ Lefebvre has identified the constant interaction between the social and material aspects of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 405).

will elaborate on further in Chapter 8 when I explain some of the substantive differences between the spiritual traditions in the rural context.

This distinction then between the inner, personal, social and public realms which I have just distinguished is crucial in distinguishing the differences between urban and rural contexts in connection to religion and spirituality. In the rural context both religion and spirituality comfortably reside in the inner, personal and social realms, however within the urban context there appears to be factors in play that restrict the overt reference to religion and spirituality, confining it to the inner realm. I posit these factors partly relate to strategic tendencies, which will form the basis for Chapter 7. In any case the point I want to press here is that this activist, 'spiky' tendency in the urban context is dominant within the social realm to the extent of pushing spiritual beliefs and practices out of the social realm (possibly personal realm) for most community members. Furthermore this tendency (which predominantly remains implicit and covert) is actually challenging the general pluralistic ethic which has conversely an explicit place within the personal and social realms. It could therefore be said that the apparent contradictions here are held in dynamic tension, if the implicit 'spiky' tendency were to exert too much influence it would surely become obvious and be perceived as counter to the explicit pluralistic ethic and conversely if spirituality were to increase in the personal realm it would surely begin to exert an influence within the social realm, which for some community members is unthinkable (Int 36 1:30), perhaps appearing too like institutional religion or dogma.

Finally I would point out that such discrepancies between the inner, personal and social realms have implications on social research and its overall conclusions. Depending on the social research methods employed there could be seemingly contradictory conclusions. In both urban and rural contexts it would seem unfeasible to pick up these subtle discrepancies, where spirituality seems to be present within a community that according to some members does not do spirituality (Int 29 117:29), without using the in-depth interview technique and assured anonymity. The greater degree of detail and complexity gained in this instance by adopting these methods can only be beneficial to overall academic understanding.

6.3.2 Ceremony, Rituals and Shrines

Given the level of spirituality manifested within the urban context I did not expect to encounter spiritual group ceremonies such as those that take

place at Yosemite. But what group ceremonies were taking place of a less overt spiritual nature? The most commonly mentioned ceremony related to solstice celebrations and in a similar manner to the rural context such solstice gatherings were part party and part ceremony to mark the changing seasons.

Wilma: “But I tell you what though I do like celebrating solstice, that's a little bit spiritual and I do like that.”

Interviewer: “But not the Equinox? Not the Celtic fire festivals?”

Wilma: “Not quite as much, but I appreciate, I like to appreciate the changing of the seasons, and the things that the Earth gives us and that I would get involved in, something like that, like our little [significant community celebration] planting a tree, and I like that.”

Int 34 34:45

Although most community members were happy to join in with solstice celebrations a cautiousness was kept in relation to any formal ceremony, especially ones that involved the use of robes commonly associated with some forms of contemporary paganism.

Toby: “I am quite suspicious of, of really organised [pause] spirituality really. Any kind of spirituality that I have felt has been intensely personal, hard to articulate, so I don't, it's not something I have really in common with other people. So I mean in terms of like you know, yearly Beltane and solstice and things like that [long pause].”

Interviewer: “You're comfortable with joining in?”

Toby: “Yeaaa [beginning of yes?] Well I am comfortable with the idea of it and,er, yeah, yeah.”

Interviewer: “In the sense of the jury is out in terms of whether that what they are doing in those ceremonies is...”

Toby: “Yeah I mean it depends if they are all wearing funny robes and kept reciting poems out, I feel quite uncomfortable, yeah but I am in favour of the idea of it, I think that's you know a way of reconnecting with, er, [pause] with, er, the natural world, natural living.” **Int 33 57:45** [brackets mine]

It is interesting how Toby here defines a distinct purpose for himself within the ceremony, namely nature-connection, re-connection between himself and nature via the marking of earth cycles. However he is seemingly suspicious and uncomfortable with the formal explicit aspects of ceremony

usually associated with contemporary paganism. This preference for an informal approach to such ceremonies resembles Eco-Paganism as discussed in Chapters 4 & 5. In my interview with Tess I discovered that she had attended stone circle ceremonies at an ancient site which was under threat from local mining operations. A large protest site had been established to protect the adjacent forest and stone circle. To my astonishment Tess said she did not meet anyone from the protest site whilst taking part in the ceremonies with her contemporary pagan group, this despite many invitations being offered to the protest camp to join in, 'they just didn't come up' (Int 32 1:20:20). I personally knew many people from the protest site and they would comfortably fit into the Eco-Pagan category as outlined earlier. The decision not to attend may have been due to discordant personal relationships or alternatively may be an example of the resistance of Eco-Pagans towards the formal contemporary pagan ceremony as discussed in Chapter 4.⁷⁹

Other instances of group ceremony seem to be connected with trees, tree planting activities and wassailing of apple trees in the autumn. Although these ceremonies were perceived as significant within the community it was made clear that such ceremonies were more focused on the social aspects rather than the spiritual or religious connotations. Ben here is asked what spiritual ceremonies take place within the community.

Ben: "I think there's very little of I mean there's stuff that, erm, wassailing which I believe is a pagan thing that I have no knowledge whatsoever but I just know from chitchat round and about that there has been wassailing here in the past and other Co-ops but I think that's more [pause] about doing social things often with other Co-ops and it's a social event tied to often the solstice or, you know, seasonal er, point of seasonal importance, I think it's more to do with the social side of it rather than any ritual connection to the, to it's kind of religious origins, I might be completely wrong about that [laughs]."

Int 30 45:17

Nevertheless I did push him on the matter of the ceremonial part and what it might mean for each of those present.

⁷⁹ Adrian Harris also notes a similar resistance at Lyminge forest protest site where activists shouted out "We don't need your rituals. We live it every day." (Harris, 2008, p. 28).

Ben: “I guess its openness for yeah it's, it marks whatever the occasion might be and some people may, er, invest in that ceremony more spiritually than others but it's a kind of open way of doing things isn't it, which yeah I think is good, pluralistic and allows for people's own view of things.” **Int 30 47:37**

Ben's quote here exposes the explicit pluralistic ethic and celebrates the inclusive nature of the ceremony where people can invest lots or a little, this being a particular feature of solstice celebrations that I discussed in Chapter 5. The quote above from Wilma also mentioned a communal ceremony at Brecon to mark a significant anniversary. A tree was planted in the permaculture garden with most of the community members and a smattering of friends present. A riddle from Chinese philosophy was recited in turn by five or six of those present. Some community members mentioned a level of tension between the formality of the ceremony, with some members weeping, and the informality of laughing and joking (Int 32 117:12), this being the usual status quo around the Brecon community.

I observed no shrines or religious symbols at Brecon and throughout the interviews there was no reference to any shrines in the personal sphere, this being a clear contrast to Raven Hill and Yosemite. Tess was the only community member to mention personal ceremony and this was in the context of a larger spring equinox ceremony, she removed herself from the main grouping to perform a ceremony to let go of something in her past (Int 32 1: 20:56).

6.3.3 Changing Spiritual Practice and Solstice Celebrations

I have outlined earlier the spiritual development away from Christianity by some of the urban community members which was in fact very reminiscent of the rural context, however here in this next extended quote Wilma expressed a dramatic change of her spiritual beliefs, perhaps better termed spiritual practice, which was unique among all the interviews.

Wilma: “Paganism, I used to be part of the, er, local Wiccan pagan crew and I used to do the Beltane, roam around with my tits out.”

Interviewer: “Was that part of [interrupted].”

Wilma: “[Names a local woodland protest site].”

Interviewer: "Oh yeah [names the same woodland protest site] and was that in a structured ritual sort of way?"

Wilma: "Yes"

Interviewer: "and have you moved on from that?"

Wilma: "Well it was fun, but I tell you what though I do like celebrating solstice, that's a little bit spiritual and I do like that."

Interviewer: "But not the Equinox? Not the Celtic fire festivals?"

Wilma: "Not quite as much, but I appreciate, I like to appreciate the changing of the seasons, and the things that the Earth gives us and that I would get involved in, something like that, like our little [significant community celebration] planting a tree, and I like that."

Interviewer: "Are you still active now in the group?"

Wilma: "I removed myself."

Interviewer: "Was that for a particular reason?"

Wilma: "It was because I was never doing it for spiritual reasons, erm, I was doing it because it was nice to be part of a group doing something fun and I liked, I did like the ritual side, I liked the burning of something, dancing and the drums and the singing and I used to lead a little singing stuff, but, other things took over, and actually yeah my life got a bit more difficult and it dropped off."

Interviewer: "You realised that [interrupted]"

Wilma: "It wasn't that important to me, never was."

Interviewer: "They were believing different things to you?"

Wilma: "They weren't even believing it, they asked for my help you see, it wasn't that I saw it and was drawn to it, it was [Wilma] you can...."

Interviewer: "You were in the formation of it?"

Wilma: "Yeah they were my friends and wanted me to do the wild woman singing stuff, practical and fun, and filled with shots of rum and whatnot."

Interviewer: "Some informality and celebration?"

Wilma: "Yes"

Interviewer: "and drinking, partying, drug taking?"

Wilma: “No just the thrill of a performance, the thrill of doing something wild, people watching it, the people watching it are people who aren't really into it, they are locals from [the location] and a lovely feeling of community in that place which is really good, and a big mixture of people and the celebration of something we've achieved, but people have enjoyed you have given them a good night.”

Int 34 34:45 [brackets mine]

This intriguing quote raises a number of questions. There seems to be a contradiction in that Wilma was leading and participating in formal ceremonies associated with contemporary paganism yet was not really ‘doing it for spiritual reasons’. Although Wilma enjoyed the ‘thrill’ of the ‘performance’ as she conducted the ceremony she also states conversely it ‘wasn’t that important to me, never was’. It would appear therefore that some degree of divergence exists between practice and spiritual motives, between participation and ideation. There seems to be an implicit expectation from Wilma herself to link active participation in the ceremony with ‘spiritual reasons’, to associate what she is practising within the group with a reason or belief. Within contemporary paganism a bias does exist toward the valuing of practices over beliefs, as commented upon in Chapter 4 (Luhrmann, 1989, p. 336; von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 92; York, 2003, p. 168) however it may be worthwhile exploring in more detail here to clarify this and other seeming ambiguities.

Hanegraaff ‘s (2003) study of the hermetic magical traditions in Western culture seems particularly relevant to this context, offering one plausible explanation. In his attempts to understand the apparently contradictory behaviour of those involved in modern hermetic magic, namely their modern scientific beliefs and their practice of non-rational rituals and practices, he employs Lévy-Bruhl’s ‘general theory of primitive mentality’ (Evans Pritchard, 1965, p. 79; Lévy-Bruhl, 1966, p. 29). Lévy-Bruhl using a comparative approach sought to outline clear differences in the mentality of civilised and primitive people. Lévy-Bruhl considered the primitive mind was pre-logical, that is unscientific or hopelessly uncritical. Beliefs and scientific ways of thinking only arose late in the development of human thought. Therefore two distinct types of mind existed, civilised and primitive (Lévy-Bruhl, 1966, p. 37). Importantly Hanegraaff, following Evans-Pritchard (1965, p. 87), defining the differences recognised by Lévy-Bruhl as tendencies which are present within the human condition. Consequently he posits that both modes of thought are present and active in all humans, they are not therefore

mutually exclusive. This important distinction challenges the notion of evolutionary progress, from one mode to the other.⁸⁰ Hanegraaff terms the two modes of thinking 'instrumental causality' (civilised) and 'participation' (primitive). The first is associated with a tendency to suspect that things that happen in the world are the result of material causation (2003, p. 375). The second tendency is understood as purely affective, not necessarily rational, 'based upon feeling instead of reflection', 'not a thing of intellect' (2003, p. 373).⁸¹ Hanegraaff goes on to posit that in modern Western societies instrumental causality has been developed into an ideology establishing a complete worldview based upon particular theories, this forming the dominant narrative of our age. Furthermore in reaction to this dominance a counter ideology has developed around the tendency of participation.

"Indeed, I would argue that the establishment of instrumental causality as an ideology during and since the 18th century provoked the establishment of a Romantic counter-ideology based upon participation; and that such an ideology of participation has now established itself as a dominant social narrative in e.g. the contemporary New Age scene. The processes of social pressure exerted by both types of ideology, as well as the competition of both types within the contemporary cultic milieu, definitely deserve close study." (Hanegraaff, 2003, p. 376).

⁸⁰ The differences outlined here have been extensively debated among anthropologists. For more detail see (Luhrmann, 1989, pp. 345-353).

⁸¹ A similar duality can be detected within Etienne Wenger's work on 'meanings within community', he categorises **Participation**: acting, interacting, living in the world and **Reification**: forms, points of focus, monuments. He maintains both categories are in constant dynamic interaction (Wenger, 1998, p. 63). I would concur with Hanegraaff that both patterns of thought are present within the human condition and what is being identified here are tendencies or degrees of emphasis at different times. The individual may be directed to either pattern by the social setting however these patterns are in essence very durable. In considering these matters I do not want to venture into the realms of cognitive science: see Adrian Harris for an excellent exploration of this theme in relation to Eco-Paganism (Harris, 2008, p. 61). What concerns me most here is how such patterns of thought influence community life and how their application at different times is being associated with religion and spirituality.

If Hanegraaff is correct in identifying such a development, from patterns of thought to an ideology surrounding each, then it could perhaps be related to the primary rural community discourse (Chapter 5) in that two ideologies may be in competition, a possibility that I will discuss further in Chapter 7. Nonetheless putting the concept of Romantic counter-ideology to one side these different patterns of thinking could perhaps explain the contradictory nature in Wilma's appreciation of ceremony and practices (participation) but continued reliance on the instrumental causality which was demonstrated elsewhere in her interview (Int 34 24:09). Consequently when I directed the conversation towards beliefs, in the above quote, she naturally indicates that it probably never was centred around beliefs but on the practice, performance and participation (Luhmann, 1989, p. 349 & 352). Her continued appreciation of the solstice celebration may well be an example of her 'participation' tendency, the thrill of a physical practice, the evocative environment, the immediate experience within her body and the arousing of all her senses.

Her single example in this instance may also be relevant to other community members who do not have any particular beliefs associated with contemporary paganism or alternative spiritualities who are nonetheless joining in with solstice celebrations and ceremonies (Int 33 57:45). Such celebrations offer immediate and intense body experiences within a social setting, and sometimes a pre-historic geographical setting such as the Aylesbury stone circle (Int 6 1:19:10). In this respect I would like to reflect on the social influences in the development of the two modes of thinking described above, this being considered an important factor by Lévy-Bruhl (Lévy-Bruhl, 1966, p. 33) and Evans-Pritchard (1965, p. 82). Lévy-Bruhl considered the differences he identified not biological or psychological but as socially determined. What could be the wider social significance surrounding the solstice celebration. A celebration which almost all of those interviewed (rural and urban) had taken part in? Is it possible that some important social function is acted out in physical form at the solstice celebration and ceremony? One in which, for some, beliefs, ideology and causal ways of thinking are put to one side and participation takes centre stage. If so the sensual participation may be experienced and enjoyed without necessarily contemplating on either religious, spiritual or political beliefs. The solstice event as a whole - ambiguous in form, part ceremony part party - unites the whole social movement without articulating in a dogmatic way unified belief as such. This format therefore enables respect for many individual ideological differences. Everyone can enjoy the sensual experience in the

safe knowledge that it is what it is, a marking of the earth's seasons. And for some activists it is no more than that, for them there is no binding obligation beyond the immediate sensory experience, one which requires no rational or other explanation. However for other environmentalists (contemporary pagan or Eco-Pagan) it does manifest an important aspect of their spiritual tradition expressing associated beliefs which are played out in ceremonial form. Within the totality of the solstice celebration then these differences have been bridged.

Whether such practices as celebrating the solstice for the first group of activists could be considered spiritual or religious, given that they express no conventional religious or spiritual beliefs, is a moot point. But what can be said is that there is certainly little or no significant belief or ideology attached to such practices. For the first group the phenomenon is probably best understood as 'participation' in the way that Evans-Pritchard understands it to be (1965, p. 82), not fully developed into an ideology, as possible in Hanegraaff's classification, and as may be the case for the second grouping. The two patterns of thinking may also relate to how those interviewed were describing the differences between religion and spirituality, with the personal spiritual experience being associated with participation and instrumental causality being associated with religious beliefs or Deism. When both patterns of thought are united, that is when a personal spiritual experience and a religious belief that reinforces that experience are aligned, a cohesive phenomenon is experienced; one that is described as truly ultimate (Int 5 49:00).

And what can be said about the 'pagan crew' that formed so quickly and that Wilma eventually gave up? To comprehend this grouping there is a need to understand the social and political context. There was no doubt that the group had for Wilma "a lovely feeling of community", its central focus was the woodland protest site and just as that political campaign was temporal so was Wilma's attachment to the group. Temporary communities such as this can be related to Maffesoli's theory of postmodern 'affectual tribes' which are characterised by their fluidity.

"It is of course understood that, just as the masses are in a state of perpetual swarm, the tribes that crystallise from these masses are unstable, since the persons of which these tribes are constituted are free to move from one to another."(Maffesoli, 1996, p. 6).

I will, in Chapter 7, comment further on the consequences of 'participation' and 'affectual tribes' on the cohesion of the group within environmental communities both urban and rural. However to finish I would like to comment again on the social research methods. The apparent contradictions outlined above could have implications for the results reached by certain social research methods. It would be not inconceivable to observe in empirical fashion the open public rituals conducted by Wilma and her crew and deduce that the group maintained a coherent belief system associated with contemporary paganism. However as she has expressed within her interview this was not in fact the case. Even with in-depth interviews, the categorisation of Wilma's worldview regarding spirituality is challenging and ambiguous. What can be confirmed after the interview process is her tendency to appreciate participation over and above beliefs or ideology. This was evidenced in her continued appreciation of the solstice celebrations and other ceremonial tree plantings etc, her appreciation of Yoga practice week by week and her negative view of ideologies expressed within her environmental community (Int 34 31:21).

6.4 Modern Science, Technology and Rationality

As with the rural context attitudes to science and technology arose throughout interviews and where they did not I intentionally solicited views on such matters. In contrast to the rural context a number of community members within the urban context expressed a very positive response when I enquired about science and technology, the 'scientific method is how we learn about the world' (Int 29 1:21:23). Even when pushed on issues such as GM they tended to question the commercial practices of GM, the farmers' ability to control the seed etc, they thought with proven trials GM may in fact be okay to use and may in fact be more productive than traditional methods. Although many members were positive about modern science it certainly did not reflect all the community members, Jed who I mentioned earlier as having an anarcho-primitivist belief was not so positive about the role of science. He was asked here about what role science played in environmental destruction.

Jed: "Yeah it leaves it to blame quite a lot actually, yeah I suppose and even modern medicine, it's a really hard one like I think it's, it's in a lot of ways very structured but then of course if you are ill you want it, but then the fact that people live for so long is quite negative really

and everyone is constantly repaired, because we are not dying off like we should.” **Int 31 101:44**

The inconsistency here in wanting modern medicine if you are ill even though you may be ideologically opposed to its use was something I noted in the rural context. In this next quote from Tom he expresses, from his atheist perspective, his frustrations surrounding a similar dynamic related to food production.

Tom: “One of my resistances or one of my struggles is, again it feels like an hypocrisy I guess, probably too strong or unkind a word to use, is around the denial of science until it's convenient. It's like people who slag off the police until they have to dial 999, to me there was a lot of people out there in the alternative movement who were verging on pagan type beliefs and whatever, who were very rejecting of all things, erm scientific in terms of food production or whatever, which I am to a great extent, but denying what had been learned, what they had been using that had come through that route, and that's still the case for me, I still struggle with that because I still meet so many people in that situation.” **Int 37 43:06**

Taking all the urban interviews into consideration it could be said that modern science and technology was embraced much more willingly than in the rural context. There seemed to be less tension for the community members in accepting the benefits that modern science brought. It is for this reason that I have placed the Brecon community within the ‘activist’ type of my four fold typology (Table 2) as attitudes to technology were far less critical than the rural context.

6.5 Conclusions

The general description of community life in this Chapter has, in a similar manner to the rural context, highlighted the prominence and relevant unity of values, lifestyle and culture. My exploration of religion and spirituality here has also identified foundational material which will be useful in making sense of the contested nature of religion and spirituality within the urban context. Firstly attitudes towards religion, or perhaps more accurately organised, institutional religion, are on the whole negative. The exception to this was Lola who maintained an organised and congregational form of Quakerism. However even in this case I highlight the frank verbal exchange with some community members in relation to her religious tradition which were

expressed during the joining process (Int 36 00:06). I would therefore conclude that religion in its organised and institutional form is not generally welcome within the urban context and religious traditions such as Lola's are few and far between. In fact it could be concluded from a study of the social realm that religion and spirituality did not exist at all within the urban environmental communities as evidenced by some members assertion that 'I think we probably would define ourselves as atheists' (Int 29 117:05); a stance taken by the majority of the community members. Nevertheless a few vaguely defined spiritual meta-empirical beliefs were held. As I have explained above these spiritual beliefs and practices have in effect been consigned to the inner realm. In Chapter 7 I will expand and comment on what may be causing such stark differences. Yet before that I would like to try and categorise the few forms of spirituality found to be present within the urban context.

Firstly I would categorise Tess as a lone example of the 'eclectic' form of spirituality which I outlined in the rural context.⁸² Her beliefs and practices corresponded closely with many of the central features of the eclectic form, namely an appreciation of a number of alternative spiritual traditions and an emphasis on the individual in determining ultimate truth.

The next form of spirituality present related to Eco-Paganism, again as I have defined it in the rural context, yet at Brecon it was expressed in a very nominal way. The best proponent of this nominal paganism would be Ben who, albeit hesitantly, identified with notions of paganism. That said, such notions include few if any beliefs normally associated with contemporary paganism. It seemed this type of nominal Eco-Paganism was referring to the tradition in a general way, one that drew on the ethics and values of the pagan tradition without the explicit reference to its beliefs. This may be similar to how nominal Christians also draw upon aspects from the background culture within the UK. This ambiguous nominal Eco-Paganism also fed into the vagueness and ambiguity relating to the solstice celebrations. Although I have stated above the solstice celebrations may have played an important social role within the movement as a whole, I would maintain that for most urban community members it remains a

⁸² Although Tess was the only member that I would categorise as 'eclectic' in that particular period of community life, Brecon had in its recent history had one or two community members who I would identify with the eclectic categorisation.

participatory (participation) category of thought, one devoid of coherent, consistent meta-empirical beliefs. That said it could for some members fall between these two stools, so to speak, that is being neither fully Eco-Pagan or just mere practice and experience. There may in fact be many gradations between these two poles. The resulting stance then being difficult to articulate, to some degree caught up in the notions of agnosticism. Nevertheless what is important to observe here in the urban context is that for the greater part such understandings are held within the inner and personal realms.

Along similar lines Eastern body practices such as yoga and martial arts could also be identified as spiritual in some aspects. I have noted that almost half of the community members have taken part or were presently taking part in such practices and as such this deserves attention. These practices in most cases related to the physical body only however for two members these practices had progressed onto Eastern meditative practices or mindfulness practice (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). This I would maintain is a stage which would be acceptable within the urban context. Body practice and meditation could therefore be associated with the 'participation' pattern of thought discussed above. However if community members progressed further into structured beliefs associated with Eastern religions, beliefs of a meta-empirical nature, I would predict conflict within the social realm. It is for this reason that Taoism or secular Buddhism (Marshall, 1992, p. 53) is preferred in the urban context, where the ideology of scientific rationalism is not challenged or threatened.

Finally I will comment on the pluralistic ethic present within the urban context. At various points within the interviews community members commented on plurality and the positive aspects of being ideologically pluralistic (Int 30 48:00). This acceptance, even celebration of diversity is indicative of the wider social movement (Scott, 1990, p. 84; Szerszynski, 1993, p. 7) I will comment further on ideological plurality in Chapter 9. However here it can be noted that within both urban and rural environmental communities and the adjacent social movement there was little ethnic and cultural diversity, cultural pluralism or multiculturalism (Plows, 2002, p. 49). This is despite efforts being made within the movement as a whole to

become more inclusive.⁸³ The ethnographic observations I have made above have identified a relatively homogenous culture. Cultural expressions and normative practices were very similar in both urban and rural contexts making for one general culture, nevertheless a particular difference fractured the communities which I will elaborate upon in the next chapter. When considering the 'religious' plurality⁸⁴ within the urban context it could safely be described as minimal. Hence in the day-to-day living at Brecon very little religious plurality existed or was permitted to enter the social realm. As I have indicated above the negative attitudes to religion and spirituality when exposed actually challenges the generally dominant pluralistic ethic⁸⁵; hence a dynamic tension exists. This can be contrast with the rural context where a diverse range of spiritual traditions are respected within the social realm. I would also say in some respects this plurality extends to become a type of pluralism in the rural communities⁸⁶. Ideological pluralism exists then within the rural context in a very earthy, rubbing shoulders, form. Spiritual differences (including differences between empirical and non-empirical beliefs) are being openly acknowledged and discussed within the social realm. This is glaringly different in the urban context where it could be said a naive form of plurality exists, one that is largely symbolic, not born of day-to-day encounters with the other. Partridge has identified a similar phenomenon within New Age spirituality where the consequences of the pluralist ethic have not been fully acknowledged (1999, p. 90). These and other stark differences then between urban and rural contexts will form my

⁸³ I have had many informal conversations related to this theme the most notable being at climate camp 2009 where a workshop entitled 'Diversity: Building a broad based social/climate movement' addressed the issue of underrepresented ethnic groups head on.

⁸⁴ Plurality defined as a willingness for coexistence only (von Stuckrad, 2005, p. 86).

⁸⁵ I will in Chapter 9 assert that this dominant pluralistic ethic emanated from environmental movements more generally, see Doyle for a detailed description of its presence at movement level (2005, p. 27).

⁸⁶ Pluralism meaning the organisation of difference as indicated by the rotation of community members given responsibility for the community fire festivals at Yosemite and an understanding that in some dimension the differences dissolve and what is believed or practised may in fact be 'all the same thing' (Int 13 26:40). Jamison refers to the phenomenon as 'Paganisms' (2011, p. 112).

material for the next chapter, strategic tendencies, where I will go on to outline similar variances within the social movement that spawned environmental communities.

~ Chapter 7 ~ Strategic Tendencies, Spiky and Fluffy

7.1 Introduction

The discourse that I will be discussing in this Chapter mainly concerns the rural context. It relates to differences in strategic tendencies, strategic philosophies, which were first identified by sociologists studying the 1960s countercultural social movements (Jones & O'Donnell, 2010; Melville, 1972; Stinchcombe, 1968; Zablocki, 1980). These sociologists observed differences in the way movement participants sought to achieve movement goals⁸⁷. They distinguished two broad groupings, militant activists and hippies. The first group were 'concerned about the public task of changing institutions and power relationships', the other group were primarily concerned with bringing about a new consciousness and new way of life, usually through the mediums of art, psychology and eastern inspired spirituality (Melville, 1972, p. 54). Movement participants of both groups were on the whole united about the social movement goals. However they appeared much divided on the how, methods, tactics and the strategies that needed to be employed to achieve those movement goals. Furthermore the second grouping became increasingly associated with religious and spiritual traditions. These differences in strategy then resulted in a strong movement discourse. I will state here why I consider that these different strategic tendencies transferred from the EDA movement in the 1990s to the present day environmental communities studied. Within the EDA movement the terms 'spiky' and 'fluffy' were developed to define two distinct strategies and, as will be explained below, most community members understood these terms and their associated meanings.

The reason that I have chosen to examine this discourse in detail is the strength of feeling surrounding it within the rural context. I suggest below that the discourse is so fierce because two strong strategic philosophies are residing within one small community which is an unusual phenomenon, one not observed within the 1960s communes movement. Additional to this

⁸⁷ A similar distinction can also be identified within political theory, in the theme of prefigurative politics, differences in modes of organization and social relationships (Boggs, 1977).

strategic tendencies are also relevant to this study in that one type of strategic tendency is being associated with religion and spirituality within environmental communities. This I consider to be a conflation by some community members and I elaborate below on why religion may actually pertain to both strategic tendencies.

Another significant reason for studying this discourse is the differing proportions of each strategic tendency within urban and rural contexts. This was not fully apparent until I was midway through the Brecon interviews and I began to notice a similar discourse. Members at Brecon were predominantly orientated towards an activist strategic tendency with only a very small proportion displaying a strategic tendency centred upon consciousness. This could be contrast with the rural context where the proportions were much more equal, hence the strong discourse surrounding strategic tendencies.

I would like to be clear from the outset that what I will be describing in this Chapter are 'tendencies' not clearly defined categories or types. In a similar manner to 'instrumental causality' and 'participation' which I discussed in Chapter 6.3.3 the two tendencies are not mutually exclusive.

7.2 A Rural Community Discourse

I begin with a quote from Pancho, one of the founding members of the Raven Hill community. Pancho here recollects the tensions in the early days as they had just moved onto the site. There appears to be two approximately defined groups that want to focus their time and energy in different directions.

Interviewer: "What about spirituality and religion, was there a unity in that sense or...?"

Pancho: "No, No and there was a big divisive thing in the early days."

Interviewer: "Divisive in the first days?"

Pancho: "Yeah some people putting in time and energy into non-practical, non-physical activities like having a four-day fire or ceremonies and things that other people didn't feel attached to and felt was a waste of time that could be spent doing something more practical, physical."

Interviewer: "and so the ceremony wasn't necessary?"

Pancho: “Yeah it wasn't bringing about a new structure or dinner or something so yeah yeah quite a tension in the early days between people that want to do the more spiritual things and people that want to do more practical things..... I remember there was one day that erm it was a four-day fire I think, [Theo] was kinda leading us in an activity where there was a fire that was held and someone was awake next to it for four days which had been recommended by a Sami Shaman I think, and that was quite early on and some people felt that was just a huge waste of firewood and time and energy that could be building something instead. ”

Interviewer: “The purpose of the fire was?”

Pancho: “To connect to the land, yeah, spirits of the land, ground ourselves in that place”

Interviewer: “Did it continue to be divisive or what?”

Pancho: “I think mostly that, er, no, I mean people left, that's what happened, people who were more attracted to the activist side of things left and often did activist stuff.”

Interviewer: “Some people, who were critical of the spiritual, left?”

Pancho: “Yeah yeah [long pause] and then new people joined but they weren't necessarily on one side or the other. Maybe the spiritual side of things became more personal rather than community based, so became less of an issue then.”

Interviewer: “So there may have been some expectations about community spirituality and they became more personal as time progressed?”

Pancho: “Yeah rather than it being a kind of common spiritual activity.” **Int 1 37:35**

Two groups can be identified here holding very different strategic approaches I will term them ‘activists’ and ‘alternatives’ for the moment. The activists then seem focused on the physical, external change within the newly occupied site, the basic realities of providing a shelter structure and dinner. The ‘alternatives’ however are focused on their connection and relationship, with the land, an element of meta-empirical belief is involved in their focus. For them instrumental purposes are largely absent, their aim is one of building a relationship with the land aided by the physical ritual.

Through their actions they hope to relate to the spirits of the land, by acknowledging their presence and respecting them.

This sharp division, also talked about by other community members (Int 22 8:04), served to shatter the illusion that the community would have a unified ceremonial element that acknowledged spiritual beliefs. From this point onward I would contend that the communal aspects of spirituality at Raven Hill were restricted, this despite many activist members leaving the community. They were, as Pancho pointed out, basically replaced by people from the same social movement who were equally on 'one side or the other'. This dynamic tension meant that any explicit functional role for spiritual ceremonies within the social realm was much reduced. Spiritual communal ceremonies were from then on facilitated by invitation. The above quote also raises issues relating to work practices which I will deal with in more detail below.

This next quote from Ozi reveals in more detail the critical voice surrounding the internal focus of the 'alternative' community member.

Ozi: "Spirituality thing comes in kind of two different ways really you can do it quite solidly and sometimes they take a real wafty, and they do the whole like a lot of comedy around the crushed velvet thing when you get all the pagans round the stones at solstice and stuff and they are just fair-weather hippies basically."

Interviewer: "So they're not full on activists then?"

Ozi: "That's the thing with spirituality a lot of them aren't activists in the slightest not at all they just want to go and visit a crystal shop in Glastonbury and go home again and drive 50 miles to walk on some hot coals or something [laughter]." **Int 6 21:45**

Activism here is being contrasted with the personal individual focus of the 'alternative', their exploits are considered 'wafty', not necessarily furthering the concrete objectives of the wider movement or community. Also criticised heavily here is the aesthetical aspect of the Pagan ceremony, relating to the image and the visual aspects.

Also noteworthy is Ozi's use of the term 'fair-weather hippies'. A number of community members also used the term Hippie when referring to the 'alternative' tendency (Int 6 55:00). This was interesting as they were clearly not referring to a visual aesthetic but a distinct characteristic. As will become apparent below, the term 'Hippie' in this context is likely to be a remnant from earlier social movements.

7.3 Strategic Tendencies within the EDA Movement

During the interviews Jay, a founding member of Yosemite, began to describe attitudes to spirituality within the EDA movement. The distinction he was making about styles of dissent appeared to be very similar to what I had encountered at Raven Hill. Jay discusses here then spirituality within the movement.

Jay: “But there were a lot of people who weren’t really on that [spirituality] at all there was this whole Fluffy and Spiky and there were people not really into the spiritual side at all but were more politically radical, erm, as well as concerned about the environment you know.”

Interviewer: “Could you just explain Fluffy and Spiky?”

Jay: “Fluffy as I understand it comes from Salisbury Hill they had a phrase keep it Fluffy”

Interviewer: “Which is non-violent?”

Jay: “Well you see it's more than non-violent it's when there's confrontation with the security guards and stuff it's about keeping it kinda cheerful and playful, it's beyond non-violent its actually trying to create an atmosphere that's friendly despite. So the other people are coming at it with confrontation we are not making a confrontation we are just trying to stop this road being built..... I would say that the people who were into the Fluffy end often [interruption by children] I would say as a generalisation that people on the Fluffy side of it were more often the people who were sort of spiritual side of it or pagany side of it, who had that aspect to their, er, relationship. Yeah also kinda Hippie/Punk kinda split although the split isn't really as real as that but you know some people on the more Hippie side and some on the Punk side something like that.”

Interviewer: “I think you said earlier that the Spiky was more political?”

Jay: “Often yeah people that were more coming from a more political point of view but you know there's a lot of overlap, for myself I am extremely political, politically conscious definitely involved in it all with a strong political consciousness but the spirituality was also there and I think that one aspect that spirituality had sometimes was an aspect like that it was not the winning that was important but that the doing it

that was important. I remember having a discussions about that with some people and that was kind of, for me that came from a kinda spiritual place but it doesn't have too you can have the same attitude and not come from a spiritual place.” **Int 22 8:04** [brackets mine]

Jay in this quote articulates the terms used within the EDA movement discourse ‘spiky’ and ‘fluffy’, (activists and alternatives respectively). From here onward I will use these terms to describe the two tendencies I am focussing on in both the EDA movement and the environmental communities in this study. I have adopted these terms as they were essentially constructed by the EDA movement and were terms were clearly understood by most community members both urban and rural.

In some respects Jay contradicts himself in this quote he begins by defining ‘spikies’ as those who were politically radical and ‘fluffies’, in an implicit way, as spiritual. Later however when I enquired further, about the political nature of the spiky, he asserted that the person who is fluffy is also very motivated by a strong political consciousness. This would suggest that a simple identification along the political/spiritual axis is not possible.

Jay also contrasts the spiky and fluffy responses during the times of tension, such as when a road protest camp is evicted. The fluffy tendency is to be non-violent, resisting the eviction by putting their body in harm’s way and not retaliating to the force being used against them. They often remain cheerful, playful, expressing themselves artistically to produce an atmosphere which in effect is feelings focused. This then is the sphere where the fluffy battles, the sphere of feelings and emotions, anger and anxiety are countered with play and celebration. It is in this way that the fluffy tendency makes a difference.⁸⁸ This then is contrast with the spiky tactic which is on the whole confrontational, violence is met with violence. As will be revealed below this non-violent/violent distinction is what is commonly associated with the terms spiky and fluffy within the social movement more generally, still I will be suggesting that it is also an indicator of more than just this tactical component (Graeber, 2009, p. 255; McKay, 1998, p. 15).

Towards the end of the quote Jay reflects on the difference between winning - stopping the road being built - and doing it anyway - even if defeat was

⁸⁸ Melville also comments on something very similar in the ‘festival of life’ in Chicago “The Festival was both agitation and play, at the same time a means and an end.”(Melville, 1972, p. 68).

inevitable. What is critical for the spiky tendency is that political power is thwarted and as a consequence the environment (Forest) is saved. But also important for them is the fact that many other environments (such as forests) besides are saved⁸⁹, as a new political force will exist. Winning is therefore essential and the relationship with political power is intense and emotional. The external result is all.

Fluffies conversely are not particularly concerned about taking political control, for them being present in that place is significant as they will affect others around them. From the fluffy perspective 'politics isn't something you do, it's something that you are' (Melville, 1972, p. 70). Furthermore for some, such as Jay, the source of this approach came from a spiritual place.

The ambiguity expressed in Jay's quote surrounding the association of the political with the spiky tendency may have more to do with the general understanding of the term political. Politics can in a general sense be considered as relating to power relationships between humans, the focus being on the decision-making process. Nevertheless politics can also be understood as a concern about the consequences of political decisions (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1967; Pepper, 1993). Jay therefore from his fluffy persuasion is passionately concerned about the consequences of the political power. To a great extent this should be expected from all those who have taken the drastic lifestyle change of joining the protest camp. They could not in any way be described as apathetic about the effects of political decisions. The focus then may well be on the engagement with the relevant political powers. For the fluffy tendency, by contrast, solutions may also reside beyond the direct challenge of the traditional political structures, ones located in the realms of culture, lifestyle and internal patterns of thinking, individual behaviour.

Finally Jay makes it clear that the spiky fluffy 'split isn't really as real as that', the distinctions are therefore not clear categories, there is much overlap with participants exhibiting both tendencies. This could also be detected in the resistance by most movement participants to identify with either term. This

⁸⁹ This aspect is powerfully demonstrated in the fact that Fort Trollheim (see below) was erected within the remains of a decimated wood that had already been cut down, there were no trees to save! When asked about this the reply came "but it's an anti-road protest innit?" (Evans, 1998, p. 140).

reinforces my assertion that what I am defining here is best termed a tendency.

In describing the spiky fluffy tendencies Jay also identified a particular protest site where this distinction was clearly articulated; the Fairmile protest camp. However I want to rely on another source in describing the circumstances at Fairmile, namely Andy Letcher. Andy Letcher from the perspective of both movement participant and academic researcher has extensively explored the forms of spirituality present within the EDA movement (see Chapter 4.2). Below I have arranged three quotes from his journal articles in as logical order as possible. I will below draw out his main observations and comment upon all three quotes.

“At Fairmile in Devon, protesters referred to themselves as ‘fairies’. At the centre of the camp stood one large oak tree, complete with four tree houses, which, for the protesters, came to resemble the magic faraway tree. The second camp, about one mile away across the valley, was literally a fortress made from earth and debris of previously felled trees. It was named ‘Fort Trollheim’, and the protesters here, they call themselves the ‘Troll’s’. Playful rivalry existed between the two camps, the Fairies at Fairmile and the Trolls at Trollheim, during the whole campaign-the trolls for example, banning the use of penny whistles at their camp.”(Letcher, 2001b, pp. 149-150).

“Whilst protesters’ motivations remain multilayered, two factors are relevant here: the ‘aesthetic’ and the ‘political’. The word ‘aesthetics’ derives from the Latin ‘*aesthesis*’ meaning to notice the world. Protesters motivated primarily by *aesthetics* have literally ‘noticed the world’ and have a keen sense of it being something of beauty. They seek to protect it from destruction, rather as one might seek to protect a work of art. Eco-Paganism and the adoption of fairy mythology are part of this aesthetic tendency. In contrast, protesters acting with primarily political motivations are more concerned with overthrowing capitalism than with aesthetics, and moreover, are likely to be hostile towards protesters of the aesthetic persuasion, and those adopting a fairy mythology. Within the protest movement there is a split between the so-called ‘fluffies’ and the ‘spikies’, a categorisation which is reflective of the aesthetic/political divide.”(Letcher, 2001b, pp. 151-152).

“By the mid-1990s there existed a pronounced split between the so-called ‘Fluffies’ and ‘Spikies’. Broadly speaking, Spikies were more urban in outlook, more concerned with the political struggle of the protests, expressed a Punk aesthetic, and were possibly more working class. Fluffies were more concerned with nature and the environment, saw themselves as hippies, and were possibly more middle-class. ‘Keep it Fluffy’ meant non-violent, being responsible, setting a positive example by behaviour; ‘keep it Spiky’ meant confrontational, violent, ‘by all means necessary’ (McKay 1998:15). Fluffy versus Spiky became the predominant internal discourse of otherness around which identity was created. So among the 27 protest camps of the Newbury bypass campaign, Skyward camp, the Pixie village, Granny Ash and the appropriately named Fluff Central were considered Fluffy camps, while Kennet and Reddings Copse were more Spiky. Likewise, Stanworth Valley was regarded as a Fluffy campaign, the M11 in London spikier.”(Letcher, 2003, pp. 67-68).

Letcher here confirms a number of the features already define by Jay. The violent non-violent divide, the aesthetic inclination of the fluffy tendency and the association of the political with the spiky tendency. However I also note that Letcher does not probe this latter association further, the spiky-political association, as I have done above. Letcher uses the example of the Fairmile protest site to elaborate upon the aesthetic, fairy mythology, the main focus of his article. He associates fluffy with the fairy mythology developed at Fairmile and also Eco-Paganism more generally. The physical arrangement and architecture of the two camps he mentions is worthy of some reflection. The symbol of the oak tree, central within the fairy camp (fluffies), appears to emphasise aesthetic concerns over the functional ones. This in turn made them more vulnerable to the inevitable challenge from the evicting forces.⁹⁰ This can be contrast with the fortress, Fort Trollheim, constructed by the Trolls, Elves⁹¹ (spikies). The symbol of the fort represents human achievement and physical change in readiness for the forthcoming challenge

⁹⁰ A very telling narrative by a movement participant relating to the eviction was published in *Do or Die* Issue 6 See References for Websites below.

⁹¹ The preferred title in Kate Evans cartoon book, *Copse* (Evans, 1998, p. 135).

and confrontation. The banning of the penny whistle from the Troll camp was also one indicator that the creative, artistic and aesthetic qualities would not form part of their identity. The friendly rivalry and crossover between the camps is also confirmed by Letcher, a feature that Jay also mentioned in his interview confirming that some protesters were part of both camps (Int 22 8:04). Furthermore Letcher notes a similar rivalry and division at the Newbury protest site, with complete protest sites being associated with either the spiky or fluffy tendency; spiky for M11 and fluffy for Stanworth Valley. Within the movement as a whole Letcher considers that the spiky versus fluffy distinction developed to become 'the prominent internal discourse of otherness around which identity was created' (2003, p. 68). This view I would certainly concur with and further it by saying it is a discourse which continues today within many environmental communities, both urban and rural.



Figure 2. Fort Trollheim, constructed out of already felled trees on the route of the proposed A30 (11of 31) accessed 14/10/2013 Copyright © Andrew Testa



Figure 3. Fairy Camp, constructed around a large mature oak tree.
(15 of 31) accessed 14/10/2013 Copyright © Andrew Testa

Next Letcher makes comment on social class structures, associating spiky with working-class and fluffy with middle-class. Letcher does not make clear on what evidence he has based these claims. He may well have been influenced by the writings of the Marxist collective Aufheben, which also have commented extensively on the EDA movement, these writings he refers to later in his article. The Aufheben collective, with their strong class consciousness, identified the fluffy tendency within the direct action politics of the 1990s, in particular within the rave protests against the Criminal Justice Bill (CJB).

“The experience of defending a rave against the police, on the other hand, does lend itself to the development of working class subjectivity; but our 'Fluffy friends' do not seem to have involved themselves with this most positive aspect of the rave scene, preferring the 'positive vibes' of paganism, Sufism, Taoism or some other theological bullshit.”

“Fluffy ideology is merely the latest development in liberal ideology, and can be summed up as the view that society is nothing more than the aggregation of individuals.” (See References for Websites Aufheben summer 1995 #4).

The Aufheben collective categorically place the fluffy tendency within the liberal political and middle-class camps and as can be seen from the quote above they are also make reference to religious and spiritual identities. From my interviews I did, as commented on in Chapter 5, detect some animosity towards the 'middle-class Hippies' (Int 6 55:00), these being associated with less-productive members expressing an explicit spiritual focus. If, as I have outlined above, the Hippie⁹² is being associated with the fluffy tendency then this could be considered support for Letcher's claim. Also some community members acknowledged they possessed a degree of post-materialism, this, as I have also commented on earlier, is also associated with the middle-class (Crossley, 2002, p. 151; Tomalin, 2009, p. 61). Consequently if the fluffy tendency does value the material and physical less in comparison to the spiky tendency then this would appear to support Letcher's claims in relation to class.

Next Letcher associates the fluffy tendency with a concern for nature and eagerness for nature connection. I would certainly concur with this claim as throughout the interviews I conducted I did note community members had differing views and relationships to nature which could be arranged into two broad groupings. Additionally these broad groupings did seem to coincide with a spiky fluffy tendency. Community members with a fluffy tendency frequently expressed in a passionate manner their *feelings* for nature. They expressed in emotional terms how they felt about their experiences of nature these being on the whole vague about the physical details (Milton, 2002, p. 57). Members with a spiky tendency however used very specific and concrete language about the subject (nature out there) this was sometimes accompanied with functionally practical aspects that would make a difference to the community.

⁹² The term Punk was also being used throughout the interviews to describe a spiky tendency however in a similar manner to the term Hippie it can infer many different meanings. Jay in his interview did specifically mention the Hippie/Punk split. Also Kate Evans uses both terms in describing the differences between the two camps at Fairmile "Mentally, in contrast to all the hippy dippy yoghurt weaving and folk singing that occurred at Fairmile, Trollheim was punk as fuck". In the USA direct action movement David Graeber has identified the Hippie and Punk 'modes of being' which have lived on from the 1960s and 1970s respectively, He associates hippies with 'pacifism' and punks with 'militant anarchism' (Graeber, 2009, p. 257).

These different dispositions to nature were evident within many of the interviews however two specific quotes may demonstrate the contrast. Firstly Heidi, who I would say exhibits a fluffy tendency.

Heidi: “Like said earlier I do feel a connection to the land at times I feel that really strongly..... Yeah I do really enjoy the cycles of nature and connecting with, you know just like, gathering in the berries this time of year, erm, just being part of all that, feeling part of nature and I don't know if that's spiritual or not, to me it just feels right, just feels like, erm, just being on the Earth really just, just being a being rather than, you know, having to be part of some (pause) thing, that isn't real, I think for me nature is all there is that's real and everything else is some kind of, some kind of construct.”

Int 7 0:50 (2)

Heidi expresses here her feelings of connection with nature, she appears to struggle expressing in words the experience and the feelings of connection to the Earth and nature. This is ultimately summed up in her statement that nature is the only thing that is real. Next Jan, who I would say exhibits a spiky tendency.

Interviewer: “Was that (living within the tree canopy) something that became more intense, that experience of nature, in those circumstances?”

Jan: “I think (pause), I think intense is the wrong word, more aware of different things, more aware of how to, how you see different things, so when you first go into woodland you just see a mass of green and you know, and you see just trees and that's it, then the more time you spend in nature the more you can identify the different plants within that situation and you can recognise different trees, you know if you tread on that bit of ground it's going to be boggy and if you go over there it's a bit drier, ... it's more about building up a more complex picture of nature and breaking it down into its component parts, erm, which I don't think is more intense, but means you can look in detail a bit more.” **Int 29 117:05**

Jan here engages with nature in a wholly different manner by breaking it down into its 'component parts', this being very reminiscent of the approach taken within the natural sciences. When relating her experiences of nature it seems very external, focussed on the subject of nature out there. Her reliance upon sight as she experiences nature is also very indicative in that it

can be associated with a hierarchies of the senses, as will be discussed later in Chapter 9.4.1, this can in turn indicate a reliance on scientific notions (Mellor & Shilling, 1997, p. 155). Although seemingly less emotional I do not estimate that Jan’s experiences of nature were any less significant for her, they did however appear different.

7.4 Preliminary Definitions

It may be helpful at this juncture to summarise what can be inferred from both my interviews and Letcher’s study in relation to the spiky fluffy tendency.

The Spiky tendency	The Fluffy tendency
Externally Focused attacking existing power structures (public realm) directly, possibly with violence, vying for power.	Internally Focused challenging political structures by changing self (inner realm) and consequently society. Non-violent methods, not particularly interested in exercising the levers of political power or saying what should be for others.
Task Focused external physical achievements, these being the source of reward and recognition from others.	Feelings Focused Internal discovery, spiritual feelings, atmosphere. Self-development, self-growth is the source of reward and recognition.
Atheist with strong Scientific Worldview But if religious strongly belief based or centred on practical mission.	Spiritual or Psychological Orientated towards the experience of practice and self-actualising worldviews.
Diachronic in relation to time, focused on past and future.	Synchronic in relation to time, focused on the now, the moment.
Focused on Human Ecology, how human actions affect the environment.	Focused on Nature Connection, Personal interaction with natural environments.

Table 3. Prominent features of the Spiky and Fluffy tendencies

Having identified the spiky fluffy discourse within the rural context I also began to detect a bias in the proportions of spikies in the urban context. It seemed that a considerably higher proportion of community members in the urban context had a spiky tendency. As I have already stated above within the rural context the tendencies were much more proportional. The spiky tendency dominant within the urban context is perhaps one of the reasons why I found there to be a weaker pluralistic ethic within the urban context and less tolerance of meta-empirical beliefs.

If Letcher is correct in identifying spiky versus fluffy as the 'predominant internal discourse of the movement' then surely this should be reflected in the way the movement communicated and networked on the national and international level (Letcher, 2003, p. 68). I would suggest that national gatherings and structured organisations could also be identified as having spiky and fluffy tendencies. The Earth First! UK organisation and gathering could be said to have a spiky tendency, its identity with the political notions such as anarchism and social ecology being particularly well represented (Wall, 1999, p. 171). As you may expect with such an anarchist bias all forms of spirituality are largely absent; nonetheless implicit Eco-Paganism and eastern body practice may be detected⁹³. Similarly, in relation to environmental communities and co-ops, the Radical Routes network seems predisposed to an activist (spiky) outlook. Members of this network commit to a pre-specified amount of radical political activism⁹⁴. A commitment such as this will inevitably direct time and energy outside the immediate community and social realm (see Chapter 3.4.4). Solidarity is usually centred on a common task or mission. It can also be noted that its membership is from predominantly urban and suburban contexts (75%)⁹⁵.

The Big Green Gathering would conversely reflect a fluffier tendency. Its focus is essentially celebration, where aesthetics and creativity are important. Expression of spiritual beliefs and practices are welcomed as part of the diverse celebration⁹⁶. It is however more than just celebration in that it

⁹³ My conclusions here are based upon my participation in a number of Earth first! UK summer gatherings and winter moots from 2004 to 2009.

⁹⁴ Radical Routes aims and principles See References for Websites below.

⁹⁵ Figures derived from analysis of the Radical Routes accessed 01/09/2011.

⁹⁶ Big Green Gathering See References for Websites below.

embraces political and environmental concerns. Importantly it can be noted that this environmental concern is enacted in a fluffy way, with an emphasis on campaigns and changing consumption patterns. In relation to environmental communities the Diggers and Dreamers network⁹⁷ also seems predisposed to a fluffy outlook. Their criteria for becoming a member of its network is much looser than the Radical Routes network, hence a greater degree of ideological diversity. Rural communities form the majority of the communities listed (68%)⁹⁸ and explicitly religious communities are also listed. The organisation structure is also very loose and amorphous.

7.5 The Activist / Hippie Divide within Counter Cultural Movements in the USA

Having commented on the spiky fluffy tendency within the 1990s road protests, I would like now link the spiky fluffy tendency back to earlier social movements, ones that were particularly influential in the formation of environmental movements. My purpose in tracing these strategic tendencies back to previous social movements is to establish a base of evidence which may support a claim that such a phenomenon may well feature in future Western social movements.

The communes literature that I reviewed for Chapter 3 had various references to different styles of dissent which appeared very similar to the strategic tendencies as outlined above. I will begin with the countercultural movements within the USA, Melville here summarises a well-recognised divide.

“The best way to begin is to look at the tensions between militant activists and hippies, at the differences between political radicals and the apolitical radicals who constitute the psychedelic left. Militant activists are in the tradition of the old left, with a programme of toppling the power structure through revolution and changing society from the top down. The Hippie is in the tradition of beat bohemianism, attempting to forge an alternative lifestyle, to change the society from the bottom up. This is the tension which Rick Margolies has called the

⁹⁷ Diggers and Dreamers See References for Websites below.

⁹⁸ Figures derived from analysis of the diggers and dreamers website Accessed 01/09/2011.

“Wheelie-feelie polarisation.” “The ‘wheelies’ are the politicians, concerned about the public task of changing institutions and power relationships. The ‘feelies’ are the artists, the psychologists and the shamans of the movement, concerned about the private tasks of expanding consciousness, becoming more gentle, sensitive, and expressive. The differences between these two orientations are enormous. The activist tries to organise an effective revolutionary group, a task orientated organisation, to meet the stern demands of the revolutionary ethic. In the hipp program of self-exploration, there is no agenda of work to be performed, no schedule of revolutionary activities. For the Hippie all works, all attempts to act effectively, are corrupt. Only right consciousness can avail. The activist accuses the Hippie of futile sentimentalism of becoming preoccupied with personal needs and hang-ups, of allowing the growth of an inhuman power structure. The Hippie replies that militants are on a “power trip”, that their human relations are corrupted in the very act of revolution, that they are involved in a self-defeating pattern of escalating violence. On the one hand confrontation politics, urban guerrillas, and talk of a “People's War”. And on the other, exotic religion, psychedelic explorations, and communal quietism. Two very different and often contradictory strategies.” (Melville, 1972, pp. 54-55).

Melville is perhaps over emphasising the tendency here to make his point. Nevertheless this and other numerous examples are evidence of a significant if not primary, internal discourse within the 1960s countercultural movement⁹⁹. The terms he uses to describe each grouping is worth noting. On the one hand militant activists, political radicals, politicians, wheelies, and on the other: apolitical radicals, hippies, psychedelic left, beat bohemianism, shamans, feelies. In a similar way to the EDA movement it is noted that one part of the discourse is more political and the other more religious and spiritual, a factor also noted by other commentators (Jones & O'Donnell, 2010, p. 100). I would maintain, given the many similarities between the two distinctions, they indicate the same phenomenon. Namely a robust pattern of

⁹⁹ Stuart Hall also identifies a similar movement discourse within the USA, this presumably based on scholarly or movement literature. (S. Hall, 1968, p. 25) Todd Gitlin identifies a similar differentiation between the ‘strategic and expressive’ elements within the countercultural movements of the USA (Gitlin, 1987, p. 133).

behaviour, orientations and predispositions which apparently arises within pluralistic social movements (NSM).

Melville goes on to describe how the 'Yippie' strategy was developed, as an attempt to blend the two strategic tendencies (Melville, 1972, p. 57), a tactic that brought limited success. Melville's purpose in summarising the activist/hippie discourse is to remark on the communes movement which followed. He outlines how each strategically orientated group eventually set up their own communes, reflecting their orientation towards transforming society. A similar classification can also be identified within Veyse's analysis of the same communes movement, although he uses the terms anarchist and mystics (1978).

7.6 The Activist / Mystic Divide within 1970s Communes Movement UK

I will now to turn my attentions to the 1970s Communes movement in the UK. As I have already commented on in Chapter 3 the US communes movement was central to the development of this movement. Is it possible therefore that a similar phenomenon developed here in the UK? Within the literature pertaining to the UK communes I have not been able to locate any sociological commentary on a division within the wider social movement as elaborated on above.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless within the communes movement itself distinctions were made which appear to reflect a similar phenomenon. Abrahams and McCulloch identified a significant contrast between communes which they describe as secular, based on either a political ideology or pragmatic solidarity, and religious or psychedelic communes.

¹⁰⁰ What I did uncover was a quote by Elaine, who was part of the countercultural movement, in Richard Mills 'Young Outsiders'. She outlines three basic groupings within the counter cultural movement. 1 Rich Bourgeois who pretend they are hippies as they don't want to lead a boring life, these people don't really understand or believe the hippie philosophy. 2 Revolutionary people, the Anarchists, who can't really fit into society, so the only place to be is within the movement. 3 Real hippies, the enlightened ones who really believe and live their ideals. They are at one with the universe, not interested in the material side of life and believe they are spirit carried around in a body (1973, p. 35). Mills does not comment on the second category within the movement preferring to contrast the hippie with modern Western man generally (1973, p. 117).

“Successful secular communes are in this sense very exact embodiments of the *idea* of organic solidarity -.... In that respect the contrast between communes of this type and mystical, religious and psychedelic communities could not be greater - it is precisely in the latter that writers such as Zablocki have found an example of something approaching a condition of pure mechanical solidarity.”
(Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 166).

The terms ‘organic and mechanical solidarity’ derive from Durkheim (1933). Their application to this context may not be altogether appropriate in that organic solidarity is usually associated with high levels of population. Nonetheless other prominent features do appear relevant, the spiky tendency with the pragmatic and functional instinct and the fluffy tendency with its mystical, psychedelic and inner focus.

Rigby another major sociological commentator on the 1970s communes movement also identifies clear distinctions between the individual communes which he groups into a six fold typology. However he also then goes on to group them back together noticing similarities between them which I would maintain correspond with the spiky-fluffy distinction.

“The involvement of the members of the ascetic religious communities in social action shows them to share in great measure the orientation of the members of the activist communes considered above..... In practice that there might appear to be little to distinguish between certain activist communes from those communes that can be considered as belonging to the ascetic tradition of community building.....As a venture inspired primarily either by their political or their religious convictions, by their beliefs as Christians, or by their beliefs as political animals.....In similar fashion, the belief held by members of the Mystic communes in the importance of the individual's expansion of his consciousness and the development of his powers of awareness reveals a close affinity with the beliefs and attitudes held by the members of the self-actualising communes.”
(Rigby, 1974a, pp. 173-174).

Here Rigby insightfully draws out an important distinction, one that exceeds the religious-political distinction. I would agree with Rigby’s analysis and also associate it with the spiky-fluffy distinction so prominent within the EDA movement. This is the primary reason why I have maintained throughout this Chapter the view that the strategic tendencies I am describing cannot be simply correlated as a binary mechanism, political/religious, spiky and fluffy

respectively. Having said that this may precisely be the assumption of some environmental community members, hence the discourse surrounding spiky fluffy and its relationship to spirituality within the environmental community. Later in his analysis Rigby associates Max Weber's Ascetic/Mystic distinction with the differences he had identified, taking the trouble to include the further association with the Eastern/Western religious traditions.

“Just as, for these communitarians, their religious beliefs fell quite naturally into the ascetic tradition of the West, for many more their beliefs fell equally naturally into the mystical tradition of the East. For the members of one community, this mysticism was expressed through an interest in the old religion of paganism, which basically involved a love for and feeling of oneness with nature.” (Rigby, 1974a, p. 256).

Some aspects of the ascetic-mystic distinction would therefore seem to resonate with the strategic tendencies described above. Asceticism has an active focus on proving oneself worthy of the Divine through action in relation to the world. With a perception of being 'God's tools', rationally active in 'mastering the world'. Mysticism in contrast has its focus on the 'other-worldly religious state' seeking a 'state of possession not action'. The individual is therefore perceived as a 'vessel of the Divine' (Weber, Gerth, & Mills, 1948, p. 325), ultimately striving for 'mystical union' with the Divine a project which necessitates 'the extrusion of all everyday mundane interests'(Weber, Roth, & Wittich, 1978, p. 544). Where Weber's categorisation does not fit so well is in the Human - Nature relationship. Indeed Rigby's association of Weber's mysticism with the 'old religion of paganism' above is to some degree mistaken. For Weber neither the ascetic nor the mystic 'affirms the world as such' (Weber et al., 1978, p. 548). Within contemporary paganism and Eco-Paganism the natural world certainly is affirmed. Nevertheless it may be argued, as I have noted above, that nature may be reduced to symbol and myth thereby becoming potentially otherworldly, moving the focus away from the earthly reality of nature to the personal experience and interaction with nature as symbol. In this sense then nature is a sort of vehicle in which the Pagan (mystic or esoteric variety) interacts with to gain spiritual insight or access to the other worldly realm. What really matters is the internal response, how the Pagan experiences' his or her internal world and what can be explored in the other realms of nature. This mystical type of Paganism is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the Western forms of Shamanism-Core Shamanism. Shamanic

journeys into the other realm are sought for healing or ecstatic experience. Such forms of paganism could be termed mystical in Weber's categorisation.

However as evidenced above there are other forms of paganism, particularly Eco-Paganism and Heathenism, that clearly focus on the hard and fast material aspects of nature including their sensual experiences within it. These forms could be considered closer to Weber's ascetic category (setting aside my observation surrounding affirmation of nature above) as they favour to the sensory and purely material aspects of nature. Here again it can be seen that such distinctions transcend the religious category and moreover transcend even religious labels such as Pagan.

7.7 Conflict Surrounding Work Tasks

Another major theme also related to Max Weber's ascetic/mystic distinction is economy and work (Weber et al., 1978, p. 407). This too may be linked to the strategic tendencies as described above. I will now return to the interviews with community members to consider its significance. During the interviews it seemed that community members whilst talking about spirituality also referred to work related activities. At times community members were openly critical about spiritual beliefs and practices and how they interrupted work patterns. In this quote from Ozi (spiky tendency) he is asked about the role of spirituality within the Raven Hill community. He explains that he is quite open to spiritual beliefs yet adds the proviso that this should be balanced with the physical, practical aspects of community life.

Ozi: "I do feel if it's (spirituality) taken to extremes where it slows down what we could be doing, you know, I like, I really do like to get things done in life and I really think if it's taken to an extreme where it puts people off...."

Interviewer: "Could you give an example of that?"

Ozi: "Well I wouldn't like to upset anyone but I do find sometimes when someone says they want to tune into a tree before you cut it down (laughter) to find out whether a tree is happy with that. I don't believe they are getting any feedback from that tree in the slightest."

Int 6 45:08

This basic instrumental concern could also be detected within the first quote in this Chapter by Pancho where the spiritual ceremony was perceived, by some, as 'getting in the way' of real progress in regard construction of the Raven Hill community. A real divergence exists here in relation to the

location of the divine deity or spirit. Again one might refer to Max Weber, specifically his theory of disenchantment. Some forms of Eco-Paganism and eclectic spiritualities seek the re-enchantment of the world, and looking for the divine deity or spirit within nature (Harvey, 2005). Yet the results of this re-enchantment appear to have a real material effect within the life of the Raven Hill community. It may be said that the divine deity or spirit actually 'gets in the way' of the desired utilitarian concern. This can be contrast with forms of religion and spirituality which revere transcendent deities and spirits, in which such concerns are lessened.

In this next quote Jan (spiky tendency) is discussing her experience of spirituality on a road protest site. She expresses gentle criticism of those partaking in spiritual practices.

Jan: "Joss sticks and meditating, and er, basically sitting around doing nothing, not very much (laughter)... loads of that yeah.... plenty of that, people who would just sit around with a dreamy look in their eyes for weeks, you kind of step over them on your way to get the next load of firewood (laughter)... I think if I was living in a permanent community with those sorts of people I would struggle.... Yeah I think maybe I have got a bit more of a, a less, less tolerant than I would like to think about people who spend a lot of time working on their inner self (laughter)... I'm not necessarily saying it's wrong or you know it's just the way I perceive it from the outside." **Int 29 40:18**

Jan here emphasises the spiritual (fluffy) persons focus on themselves and their inner experience, this seems to restrict their ability to do practical work tasks and engage with others around them. This dynamic tension, between sitting around on the one hand and getting jobs done on the other, was noted by Dorothy Schwarz when she visited Tinkers Bubble. She noted how some community members seem to never stop working whilst others spent a lot of time just sitting around. She identified within herself a strong Protestant work ethic, one which was constantly reminding her of jobs that needed to be done and an awareness of those who were more relaxed (Weber et al., 1978). She questioned whether the relaxed manner of these community members was a 'deliberate response to the Protestant work ethic' (Schwarz & Schwarz, 1998, pp. 50-51).¹⁰¹ These then are just two examples from

¹⁰¹ Mellor and Shilling's analysis relating to the existence of different types of embodied habitus and reformed bodies may link to the strategic

many similar instances where community members (usually spiky) emphasised the tensions between time being spent upon the physical, practical, functions of community life and on a community members internal personal or spiritual development.

I would now like to refer to the different realms of community life which I have outlined in Chapter 6 and see if they relate in any way to the spiky-fluffy contrast. I began in section 6.3.1 describing the inner realm, the inner life, this could indeed be linked to the fluffy tendency. In a similar manner the public realm could be associated with the external political focus of a spiky tendency. However what about the social realm, the immediate community group? I would not particularly associate this realm exclusively with either the spiky or fluffy tendency in that both orientations are equally concerned about this realm. As I have noted above the way each tendency goes about changing and reforming the world is very different. The fluffy orientation tends to reform by challenging the individual, the self, starting from the inside and moving out. This approach therefore eventually mediates out to the social realm, which is presumably awaiting transformation. The spiky orientation, conversely, seeks influence within political structures and powers, thereby enabling a healthy society (social realm) to develop a favourable political and physical environment (Oved, 2013, p. 249). Importantly such an approach does not consider a healthy social realm can be developed or maintained until the transformation of these wider political structures operating in the public realm.

The inherent differences within the strategic tendencies, between direct political action/physical action on the one hand and inner consciousness/personal change on the other relate to my four fold typology (Table 2). Within the urban context a spiky tendency dominates and it is for this reason that I have placed Brecon within the 'activist' type indicating a propensity to engage in political action. Conversely within the rural context a greater proportion of community members displayed a fluffy tendency indicating a propensity to live an exemplary lifestyle with correct personal

tendencies. Here I am referring to the 'Protestant modern body' with its orientation towards the instrumental, an embodied muscular consciousness associated with rational work and the 'baroque modern body' with its orientation towards sensual experience which inculcates effervescent forms of sociality (Mellor & Shilling, 1997, p. 17 & 174). Such embodied differences then would surely be difficult to transcend.

attitudes. It is for this reason that I have placed both rural communities within the 'nature-centred' type. Nevertheless as indicated earlier some community members within the rural context displayed spiky tendencies, which then perhaps draws the communities towards the 'activist' and '(tribal)' types. I would maintain that the difficulties in placing the rural communities on the typology are indicative of the differences being described in this Chapter.

7.8 Religion and Spirituality and the Spiky / Fluffy Tendencies

As outlined earlier in Chapters 5 and 6, the proportions of religion and spirituality evident within urban and rural contexts were starkly different. I am suggesting here that these proportions correspond with the different strategic philosophies evident within the EDA movement (Letcher, 2001a, p. 60). Environmental communities generally have sorted themselves in line with the strategic tendency. As Andy Letcher has noted the propensity of the spiky tendency to be more urban has led to the greater influence of the spiky tendency in urban contexts (Letcher, 2003, p. 67). Rural contexts are not nearly so dominated by the fluffy tendency but this is likely due to the extremely political characteristics of the EDA movement as a whole. During the interviews, both urban and rural, community members consistently associated the fluffy tendency with spiritual beliefs and practices. However as Rigby has noted (1974a, p. 173) and some deep ecologists have maintained (Sutton, 2000, p. 137) the mystic approach is not always founded on meta-empirical beliefs; it can be centred on the personal experience in the moment. It was not uncommon for those exhibiting the spiky tendency to miss this subtle distinction and conflate the two distinctions by labelling all fluffy expressions as spiritual (Bookchin, 1988). The spiky tendency can also potentially be religious or spiritual, a spiky approach does not necessarily prevent this however the forms adopted tend to focus on the external, organisation and physical aspects. For instance Ozi from Raven Hill (spiky tendency), although very scientifically orientated, articulated an openness to explore religious beliefs; however the forms that appealed to him were very structured and associated with Heathenism. He conversely remains very critical and certain that he would not accept any 'wafty' form of internal spirituality (Int 6 24:50). Attitudes here perhaps indicate that the spiky-fluffy distinction also relates to my differentiation between spirituality and religion as outlined in Chapter 1.

In the urban context I noted how Eastern body practices were common. Eastern forms of meditation were also employed for instrumental purposes, namely clearing the mind to tackle tasks more efficiently (Int 34 37:00). It is interesting to note how both the tendencies within environmental communities have adapted Eastern religious traditions, these forms being the natural choice of alternative bohemian cultures that challenge the dominant Western religious forms (Veysey, 1978, p. 247). The fluffy tendency has a bias towards the process of detachment from the material world, this resulting for many in a withdrawal from external political engagement; the external focus when present is directed toward nature or cultural transformation. The spiky tendency conversely has focussed on the external body practices of these religious traditions, stripping away most of their functional aspects which may conflict with their individual autonomy.

Before moving to my conclusion for this Chapter I would like to suggest that the strategic tendencies outlined here may in fact correlate with some of the differentiations that I have made in the previous chapters. Firstly my adoption of Hanegraaff's distinction in Chapter 6.3.3, the differences between, instrumental causality and participation. The fluffy tendency does appear to have similar characteristics to participation as it is orientated towards affective facets and sensory experience. The emphasis on experience inherent within participation directs the focus to the moment, (synchronic) a feature also associated with the fluffy tendency. The spiky tendency, in contrast, is orientated towards political structures that are carefully thought and reasoned out. These are essentially based on reasoning of the past or future, (diachronic) which relates to instrumental causality. The spiky interest in the levers of power necessitates an approach that carefully ponders cause and effect; this integrates well with instrumental causality.

Another connection that could be observed corresponds to the division between contemporary paganism, especially the more esoteric forms, and Eco-paganism, practical paganism as expressed within the EDA movement. This discourse within the EDA movement appears to correspond with the spiky-fluffy distinction. Contemporary paganism, especially the forms that are symbolic or esoteric, emphasise the body experience of the individual, their personal consciousness, spiritual feelings during ceremony for example. Symbols and imagination are also important aspects of such traditions. These aspects could be said to reflect the fluffy tendency, the internal focus on the individual. Eco-paganism and practical paganism in

contrast are more politically orientated, interested in political effectiveness. The lived aspects within nature and the practical defence of nature can be observed in the physical world (external focus).

7.9 Conclusions

I want again to reiterate what I stated in my introduction, namely that what I am outlining here is a disposition. At times observing such, whether within an individual community member or within the environmental community as a whole, can be very difficult. Some members and communities appear to be equidistant between the two tendencies, equally influenced by both. Nevertheless I would maintain that the distinctions I have drawn out within this Chapter are relevant and useful in explaining the tensions within the rural discourse surrounding spirituality.

The most interesting aspect revealed in the interviews is the existence of both spiky and fluffy tendencies within the same environmental communities. This phenomenon was not observed or commented on within the literature I reviewed, which included the USA and UK communes movement.¹⁰² What sociologists such as Melville and Kanter (USA) and Rigby and Abrams (UK) have categorised are communes distinctly matching one or other tendency. The dominance of this divide within the contemporary communes in the USA has been emphasised by Laurence Veysey.

“The fact remains that most anarchists and nearly all religious mystics would today hotly deny that they share anything significant in common with their opposite numbers. The very fact that I have joined the two traditions in this book will seem rather unnatural and distasteful to adherents of both persuasions. These sentiments which I detected in the course of my interviews with older people, naturally cannot be ignored.” (Veysey, 1978, p. 49).

What has arisen within both Raven Hill and Yosemite is the existence of both strategic tendencies, hence the discourse. This development may be of particular interest to sociologists studying pluralism (Hinnells, 2005, p. 42).

¹⁰² Zicklin records a movement orientated commune in the USA that may constitute a fusion of these tendencies, ‘Ghandian pacifism and French existentialism’, however he records that the Buddhist orientated section had divided itself from the politically active section and lived in separate houses (Zicklin page 54).

As I have discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 the pluralist ethic is most certainly present in both urban and rural contexts. I would argue that within the movement generally an emphasis on the pluralistic ethic, this being in line with the NSM theories described in Chapter 2, brought about the conditions to make this possible. Other factors may also have played a part; as the movement dissipated (late 1990s) there may well have been fewer activists within the pool to draw on when forming environmental communities. Attempts to select particular uniting themes consequently failed and compromise was necessary.¹⁰³ Another possibility could be that social movements in recent times have decided that both these strategic tendencies are vital in effective mobilisation. Therefore this tactic could actually be considered a pragmatic technique or feature which ensures the success of the movement by broadening its appeal and the way it functions.¹⁰⁴ Veysey is again helpful here by recognising just such a symbiosis or parallelism present within the US.

“How are anarchism and mysticism related to each other? Is it a mere fluke that in Lloyd’s novels *Forest Westwood* is identified with both? In the counterculture of the 1960s the two tendencies appeared in close proximity, almost as if they were alternative directions in the new lifestyle: the outer versus the inner, the left wing versus the apolitical, the unstructured versus the structured. One wonders whether they have really shared this degree of parallelism over a longer period of time.” (Veysey, 1978, p. 44).

A practical example of this fusion within the EDA movement UK might be the ‘Reclaim The Streets’ (RTS) protests conducted in the 1990s (Wall, 1999, p. 87). Both spiky and fluffy orientations were brought together in one big event.¹⁰⁵ The spiky tendency is particularly interested in the material effect

¹⁰³ The process of compromise was discussed in the Yosemite interviews, some community members wanted a vegan only community (Int19 44:20).

¹⁰⁴ Herbert Marcuse has identified a similar mutual dependency in revolutionary change. He highlights the fact that hippies may be crushed at any moment by the political forces and that the left in its pure form has a tendency to turn ruthless or puritanical (Berger, 1981, p. 201).

¹⁰⁵ A tactical fusion was well recognised within the movement “There is a stock response to the fluffy/spiky debate which has become fashionable to the point of authoritarian orthodoxy by Reclaim the Streets and some

achieved from the event, the challenge to political authority. The fluffy tendency could also play a part by expressing their aesthetic talents in a celebratory fashion. Could it be that in actions such as these, whereby both tendencies came to work together, the movement consciously (perhaps unconsciously) recognised the benefits of diversity? Whatever the circumstances that have brought about this conflation within environmental communities the starkness of these divisions are apparent and are further conflated with community discourses surrounding spirituality.

Within this Chapter I have outlined in detail the discourse surrounding the strategic tendencies in environmental communities. Within the rural context it was found that a significant community discourse existed which aligned with the spiky-fluffy distinctions. Furthermore one side of this discourse has become associated with spiritual beliefs and practices. Distinctions between urban and rural contexts have also been highlighted and related to the respective tendencies. I have traced the phenomenon of strategic tendencies and their resulting discourses back to the EDA movement and the earlier 1960s communes movement, both in the UK and USA. I have considered Andrew Rigby's claims that differences in strategic philosophy can be linked to Max Weber's ascetic/mystic distinction and concur in the main that they are, but complicated somewhat by the different forms of contemporary paganism (esoteric and animist Chapter 4.4). I have suggested that previously defined distinctions relating to participation and instrumental causality or contemporary paganism and Eco-paganism/practical paganism may match with strategic tendencies. I acknowledge that the historical connections I am attempting to make involve themes which are wide ranging and complex.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless if such a theory can be buttressed by further research it may be possible to forecast that such tensions will in all probability exhibit themselves in future Western pluralistic social movements. Delineating these basic tendencies then will aide me in the coming task of understanding the role spirituality plays within environmental communities. I will now focus my attentions on the second community discourse in the rural context.

Earth First!ers: that it is a diversion, a distraction." *Do or die* 10 page 355-376 See References for Websites below.

¹⁰⁶ Berger has suggested that a book remains to be written historically tracing these tendencies, the hippies and political radicals (Berger, 1981, p. 200).

~ Chapter 8 ~ The Quest for Spiritual Unity

8.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I will be building upon my analysis of environmental communities in the rural context (Chapter 5). I will turn my attention to the development of core shamanism in response to the Art of Mentoring movement (AOMM) and in particular how its central characteristics' are becoming distinctly different to Eco-Paganism and Eclectic forms of spirituality. My focus on this theme was directed by another community discourse which, unlike Chapter 7 'strategic philosophies', centred directly upon religion and spirituality. This particular discourse was not evident within the urban community, Brecon, this most likely due to the lower levels of spiritual practice in that context. In addressing the conflict surrounding the Art of Mentoring movement I will be highlighting how the general pluralistic ethic, as outlined in Chapter 3, is being challenged by a form of core shamanism which resembles the central characteristics of the AOMM. The pluralistic features of contemporary paganism and Eco-Paganism are also relevant here as is the privatised, detraditionalised features of alternative spiritualities, both outlined in Chapter 4. To help me define the differences between the AOMM and the dominant forms of spirituality within the communities I will draw upon the work of Marion Bowman (2004, 2007) who is renowned for her research on spirituality within Glastonbury. The model she has developed to elaborate on vernacular religion will be helpful as I address differences in relation to authority. The developments and tensions that I outline in connection with religion and spirituality represent an important element within the key findings of Chapter 10, they add complexity to the assertion that environmental communities are generally heterogeneous in relation to religion and spirituality.

8.2 The Aspiration for a Unified Spiritual Tradition

Throughout the interviews at both Raven Hill and Yosemite a significant number of community members expressed a desire for a unified practice and understanding surrounding spirituality. This development was important to focus upon, since as noted in Chapter 1.2, such forms of spirituality have the potential to function like a religion, organised religion. The following

collection of quotes from Jay, Fran (Yosemite) and Theo (Raven Hill) sum up the desire well.

Jay: “For me I would be, I more would want to live in a community where that [spirituality] was central, collectively, rather than being each person, each individual thing with tolerance, you know, but that's me and obviously then it would need to be the right thing you know.”

Int 22 31:40 [brackets mine]

Fran: “Some people hope for a more cohesive, collective spirituality but I don't think that will happen, we won't become a spiritual community.” **Int 23 28:15**

Theo: “My ideal would be to live in a community where there was a lot more homogeneity of, erm, outlook and practice on the, kind of, spiritual front. But equally I really celebrate the fact that we are quite a diverse bunch and that I think everybody has their own spirituality in their own way and that we can find commonality and celebrate the diversity, but sometimes I do feel a lacking and the fact that because not everyone is on the same, singing from the same hymn sheet sometimes it can be like saying a blessing at a meal can feel a bit strange because some people are into it and some people aren't.”

Int 5 27:23

Another indication of such desires to homogenise may perhaps be evident in the adoption at Yosemite of a communal ceremonial pattern based on the eight-fold calendar, Celtic fire festivals (Taylor, 2005, p. 283), however at present a very diverse range of ceremonies take place. This next quote from Alice conveys how some community members were also apparently well aware of the bonding dynamic within religiously focused communities, which she chooses to term spiritual.

Alice: “I remember somebody telling me years ago that he had done quite a bit of research into communities and his conclusion was that, erm, the communities that stay together are the spiritual ones, and that's not because they are spiritual but because they have a shared focus, that they work together sort of daily, weekly, or whatever, and I kind of felt well we kind of got permaculture, that's what we do together, that's our main, that's our focus, but permaculture is not like that it's really nebulous and broad isn't it, it's not a focusing thing, particularly, it could be.” **Int 18 35:40**

Another member of Yosemite also relayed to me either the same or similar research finding, emphasising the bonding effect for community members engendered by such a unified spiritual focus (field notes Yosemite September 2011). In this next quotation Jay is asked what role spirituality plays within the Yosemite community.

Jay: “This community? [Pause] I don't really feel spirituality has much of a role in this community, as a community, it's kind of an individual thing, it ebbs and flows, there can be times when some people might be gelling together around kind of spiritual stuff and you know, some of the people who are more into that have left.... so I don't think it has, but I could be wrong, but I don't feel like it has a role for the community as a whole, which I feel is a bit of a shame, at the same time you can't dragoon people into believing the same thing.”

Interviewer: “A shame in what sense?”

Jay: “Because it is very gluey and because for me, you know, I've left now so it doesn't matter, but I am a very spiritual person or spirituality is important to me.” **Int 22 25:28**

Jay's quote indicates a clear desire for the 'gluey' aspects of a homogenised spiritual community. The stark reality for community members who wish to pursue a unified tradition is that they have to leave and join a specifically spiritual based community. Jay had, when I actually interviewed him, formally left the Yosemite community and part of the reason he gave was wanting to focus on a single spiritual tradition. As can perhaps be detected within the above quotes there are other community members who would not be happy about such an evolution. Plainly community members who held no spiritual beliefs whatsoever would have difficulty with this type of development but perhaps also community members who practiced a spiritual tradition which they did not want to compromise in any way would also struggle. From such sentiments then comes the alternative view within the community discourse, namely that such harmonisation could cause divisions within the community. In this quotation from Heidi she was asked what role spirituality has within the Raven Hill community.

Heidi: “I don't know if it has a role for the community as a whole to be honest, I think it is very important for some people and it's, you know the main focus of their lives actually, their spiritual practice, and for others it's really not at all important, erm, and so I think the role of spirituality here could almost be seen as a divisive one actually,

because the community is definitely divided along the lines of spiritual beliefs and non-beliefs, and how that affects how we function on a practical level and it's been the cause of frustrations and er, that kind of thing.” **Int 7 15:15 (1)**

It is interesting that Heidi emphasises the effects on the practical functioning of community life, this chiming with other community members at Raven Hill who were concerned that a spiritually focused community may divert time and energy away from the physical aims of the community (Field notes Raven Hill Autumn 2011). Furthermore there is a fair degree of understanding in relation to the power dynamics surrounding religious structures as indicated here by Arnie even though he actually uses the word spirituality.¹⁰⁷

Arnie: “I mean spirituality, I mean it's often personal, but 9 times out of 10 there is always somebody somewhere has, [pause] cynical point of view, a hierarchical point with it, and that's the thing I struggle with.”

Int 16 1:11:04

8.3 The Art of Mentoring Movement

The community discourse as outlined above was evident within both Raven Hill and Yosemite and given the on-going ties to wider social networks (see Chapters 3 and 5) it is highly unlikely that aspirations for a unified spiritual tradition within the community will be fulfilled. However throughout the interviews I became aware that some members from both Yosemite and Raven Hill were in fact pursuing this type of spiritual unity in another context. I kept hearing about an organisation called ‘Art of Mentoring’ AOMM, community members talked about attending gatherings, spoke enthusiastically about their experiences and what they had learned in connection to the ‘Art of Mentoring’ courses.¹⁰⁸ Fortunately for me Theo was willing to explain some of the workings of this movement. I will summarise here what he said in a 21 minute conversation about the ‘Art of Mentoring’

¹⁰⁷ Also see religion and spirituality section of Chapter 1.2 & 5.4

¹⁰⁸ These courses appear to have unrestricted admittance however an attendance fee is necessary to cover accommodation costs, adults £500- £600 Children £250 some bursaries are available. See References for Websites below- how to book.

organisation also adding one or two facts gained from Neo (Int 5 49:00 & Int 6 54:10). I must stress here before I begin this section I am not attempting a detailed study of the AOMM but only recapping on information offered in the interviews at Raven Hill and Yosemite, supplemented with information gathered from their Internet website. I have never attended an 'Art of Mentoring' gathering.

AOMM takes its inspiration from indigenous or native peoples around the world and in this respect is very akin of Michael Harmer's Core Shamanism which I discussed in Chapter 4.7. However, as I will explain, it has in this instance been developed in some key areas. Knowledge about such native people is received through the filters of anthropology and seemingly dependent upon Jon Young's interpretations, he himself being an anthropologist.¹⁰⁹ The central dynamic of the organisation revolves around the concept of mentoring and Jon Young, the founder of the AOMM, focuses on the wisdom he himself has received by being mentored. In this respect there is an emphasis within the organisation on lineage, as Jon Young was mentored by Tom Brown who was in turn mentored by a Native American called Stalking Wolf (Brown, 1993). However Jon Young's mentoring experiences are not restricted to one native people group; he also has experience of being mentored by a Kenyan tribesman named 'Ingway',¹¹⁰ a bushman of the Kalahari. Ancient wisdom and plant knowledge then is to be found in various native peoples around the globe and furthermore this wisdom is deemed beneficial in unlocking nature's secrets. This quotation is taken directly from its website.

"Art of Mentoring UK as an organisation provides connective tissue between nature-based practitioners, offers trainings and forums for sharing our learnings. We are standing on the shoulders of many teachers before us and are especially thankful to founding visionaries Jon Young and Mark Morey for supporting us to begin to operate more as a movement, a ground swelling of inter-connections, then as individuals carrying the heavy load of our visions. Our speciality if you like, is creating a village model in which everyone's unique

¹⁰⁹ I have not been able to verify any formal connection to an academic institution; the title 'anthropologist' was used by community member in the interviews.

¹¹⁰ This may not be the correct spelling.

contribution has its place,.... After attending an Art of Mentoring course you have the opportunity to join an informal regional web of previous participants, hold gatherings and continue the learning journey together. In this way, we are building a network of people committed to nature connection as the foundation of our inner peace. In our network there are bushcraft instructors, eco-therapists, shamanic workers, scientists, storytellers, mainstream and alternative educators for all ages, conservationists, healers, permaculturalists, crafts people, cultural creatives and others I wouldn't dare put in a box!"¹¹¹

As can be detected within the quote an important ingredient is community or 'regenerative community design' as it is termed by the instructors. Interestingly the word 'sustainable' is challenged¹¹² within the movement as it is perceived as keeping something the way it is, whereas 'regenerative' community conveys a constant evolving and renewing freshness. This 'regenerative community design' then has a formal structure which allows the people who come along to know exactly where they are within the movement. At a week-long event participants are able to experience an intense form of community. The communal structure is based around the visual concept of concentric rings with the furthest most ring from the centre being designated ring one, ring one marks your introduction to the 'program' as it was termed, you are a participant, but importantly it is stressed that you are also considered a co-creator of the whole event. Within ring one, participants receive lectures and are taken through some of the program. There then seemed an implicit expectation that from ring one a participant will progress to ring two, ring two is for those who have attended the lectures and understood some of the basics of the movement. These participants were now sent out to discover what they could find within nature and bring back their findings to the main group. Ring three contained participants who had organisational roles and responsibilities such as site manager or catering. Ring four demarcated those who had a co-ordinating role and their

¹¹¹ Extract from the Art of Mentoring website. See References for Websites below.

¹¹² It could be that the existing dominant organisational structure, namely 'sustainable communities', is also being challenged in this use of language.

significance on the whole event is considered very important even though what they do is not always understood or discernible. From this point on Theo was extremely vague about the other rings however he did know that Jon Young was contained in ring six and the elders who were considered very important were in ring eight. There was a great emphasis on community support with everybody within the program being supported usually by someone in the next ring and great play made about the fact that right at the centre of all the rings are the ancestors and spirits also offering their support. The week long course is viewed as 'one big ceremony' where 'worship' communal singing, drumming, dancing, storytelling and games are experienced, again all within set structures. There exists within the movement a clear bias towards experience in the moment and an emphasis on wisdom and curiosity which is contrasted with didactic knowledge and information routinely considered as limited. This is perhaps one of the reasons why so many of the community members said that you had to *experience* the AOMM not learn about it from a distance. They described it as a truly holistic way of being which you would enjoy as a 'beautiful thing'. The activities are said to bring the participants into a place of deep connection with nature and deep connection with community. This is considered to bring healing from grief, anger and negative emotions that are in fact holding participants back from their birth right which is connection with the ancestors, connection with nature and connection with one another. All in all this was described as an experience that cannot be put into words, a 'truly amazing thing'. It is little wonder then that some community members at Raven Hill talked about the AOMM possibly becoming significant for the Raven Hill community in the future.

Daisy: "It's like, that's [AOMM] becoming the thing that feels like the spiritual glue, may be something we all, or more of us, are involved that could be perceived as spiritual." **Int 9 28:15**

Devon: "It's [AOMM] certainly become a reference point for a good half of the community." **Int 10 1:59:15** [brackets mine]

Such aspirations then formed one half of a community discourse, however, not all community members were so enthusiastic and tensions were apparent. These tensions appeared to revolve around the *numbers* of community members involved in the same spiritual tradition and the increasing dominance of that singular spiritual tradition within the community members' life. The numbers of community members practicing a tradition may not, in and of itself, have been a contentious issue if the same members

also adopted an 'Eclectic' approach, practicing many other traditions. However as noted in the quotation from Theo above (Chapter 5.4) some community members are moving from many spiritual practices to core spiritual practices focused around Core Shamanism (Int 8 21:28). The two factors then, half the community adopting a united spiritual tradition similar to the AOMM and the increasing focus of those members towards a singular core approach, have combined to threaten the dominant pluralistic ethic. These quotations from Ozi, Heidi and Devon are indicative of the tensions that were building up.

Ozi: "The thing is if you get a whole community living together with the same spirituality you are going to enter into some kind of cult aren't you? [Laughter] I am personally finding this whole 'Art of Mentoring' thing that people are doing at the moment a bit scary, I am finding it is, feeling a bit like a cult to me at the moment, I'm feeling [pause] like it's not something I want to get involved in, and because of that I felt rather excluded from a lot of situations, and the people that are involved in it you mention the fact that it might be a bit of a cult and they get quite offended about that, which if anything surely could suggest maybe actually it is a bit of a cult..... People are changing the name 'Art of Mentoring' to 'The Cult of Mentoring' you know." **Int 6 54:10**

Heidi: "No I don't have anything to do with it AOMM, I did go to one, erm, I don't know really how I feel about it, I feel [pause], I quite like Native American philosophy, some of the, you know, games they play and everything is already good, I do feel there is an awful lot of dogma there, a lot of dogma and, erm it's for me it seems spirituality gone a bit too far maybe at the cost of doing other stuff that is more important, like building this kitchen and getting on with what needs to be done here and I did go to one gathering that we had here and I found it really wafy to be honest." **Int 7 22:04 (1)**

Devon: "It's certainly become a reference point for a good half of the community, erm, and yet I think it's become a sort of the wedge between other community members, the ones that get it get it, and the ones who don't don't. I tend not to mention 'Art of Mentoring' to those who don't go because it's just a bit more of a, instantly switch off, you know fffff. [exhaling breath] bollocks, there's a lot to it, I don't see it as a religious thing, I don't see it as even as a spiritual thing, I just see it as a system." **Int 10 1:59:15**

As I have already stated the beliefs connected with Core Shamanism are not particularly novel or problematic within environmental communities. However, the AOMM version of shamanism has a number of inherent features that have become difficult to cope with within the communities. Since these difficulties are my focus I have chosen to term the spiritual expression influenced by the AOMM within the communities themselves as 'Core Shamanism (developing)', this closely resembling AOMM beliefs and practices but expressed within the communal context. I will now outline the differences between general Core Shamanism and the AOMM shamanism. Firstly Core Shamanism¹¹³ is distinctly individual, inherently resistant to hierarchies and dogma, Michael Harner goes out his way to emphasise that the full benefits of the shamanic tradition are accessible to the individual lone practitioner (Harner, 1990, p. xiv). Group practice and exercises are mentioned by Harner however the organisation of such groups is not prescribed in detail or stressed as significant to the central shamanic practice. This can be contrast to the structured approach of AOMM as described above with its emphasis on the group experience, this understood as intrinsically necessary to comprehend the tradition (Int 5 49:43). Particularly relevant here is the group ceremony, the singing of songs in a repetitive manner. This in turn may induce an altered state of consciousness, which will inevitably be associated with the group. Theo's assertion quoted above that the whole gathering can be considered 'one big ceremony' also reveals the prominence of ceremony (Int 5 49:00). Nevertheless for participants there are some tensions around this group ceremony as indicated here in this quote from Devon.

Interviewer: "Are there ceremonies at those gatherings or..."

Devon: "Yeah a bit too many for my liking to be honest, there is a big ceremonial aspect to it, although I will say that it's the most authentic I've come across, but with a ceremony there is always opportunity for control and dogma a little bit and there is always an opportunity for

¹¹³ Core Shamanism here is interrupted as a coherent set of shamanic beliefs and practices, these beliefs and practices have been garnered from indigenous tribal people around the globe and synthesized by Michael Harner, as outlined in Chapter 4.7, however I do recognise the term is also used to describe a Western Eclectic approach to shamanism that is wider and in some cases different to Michael Harner' approach, Wallis therefore terms what I am describing here as 'Harnerism' (Wallis, 2003, p. 48).

that to become polluted somehow, but then yeah, there is a lot of singing and a lot of kind of psyching up for meals and that sort of stuff don't know if that's really ceremony, a lot of thanksgiving, again that can become a bit too much as well I personally don't feel the need to verbalise my Thanksgiving whether I am in a group or whether I'm on my own in the woods." **Int 10 1:59:15**

The significance of verbalising beliefs should not be underestimated in this context, especially through the lyrics of songs. Oneness is emphasised in the harmony of many voices. What is particularly important here though is who introduces the songs to the group, who decides what words are sung and my presumption is that such will be solely directed by recognised group leaders.

The importance of lineage is largely absent from Core Shamanism, so in this sense the 'who' is not particularly important only that the teaching is derived from authentic indigenous sources. Again this can be contrasted with AOMM where the notion of lineage seems particularly important especially in relation to Tom Brown, Stalking Wolf and associated prophecy, this being emphasised here in this quote from Neo and also referred to in the movement's internet details quoted above.

Neo: "So you are hearing from Jon Young rather than the fact that you generally trust him you're getting that link to Tom Brown without meeting Tom Brown."

Interviewer: "A sort of lineage?"

Neo: "Yeah lineage, Tom Brown mentored him from the age of 11 until now and he's this amazing guy Jon Young, really genuine."

Int 8 40:26

Neo stated earlier in the interview that Tom Brown was mentored by Stalking Wolf (Grandfather) who was descended from the Apache traditions in North America, therefore extending the lineage to many generations.

The emphasis on the mentoring relationship within AOMM is another distinct difference from Core Shamanism generally. Harner's approach does not major on how Shamanic knowledge is transferred from one person to another, he is eager to stress that 'you do not have to be in an apprenticeship situation to learn' Shamanic techniques as 'a written guide can provide the essential methodological information' (Harner, 1990, p. xix). Within the AOMM learning takes place within the mentoring relationship model, either one-to-one or within a group where mentees are learning from

a prominent mentor such as Jon Young. The term elder is also used to indicate the level of wisdom held by a mentor. This important mentoring relationship does not take place in isolation but is supported by the organisational structures, the concentric rings, which are orientated towards the received tradition. It is worth noting the social and environmental settings where the learning takes place. The AOMM is starkly different to Core Shamanism - the difference between gaining knowledge by reading a book alone on your sofa (the Harner approach) and a body experience, interacting with nature and group of people under the direction of a personal mentor whom one has built a relationship.

These differences that I have outlined in many ways relate to trust and authority so I would now like to pinpoint in particular the authoritative source within the AOMM. The authoritative source is to be found within indigenous cultures who themselves have obtained such wisdom from generation after generation of tradition. It can be noted that for participants within the AOMM the authoritative source is at some distance. The ultimate source, the wisdom needed to unlock nature's secrets is distant, located in the exotic other, native culture. Even if they were to try and make contact with such indigenous peoples overcoming the significant geographical cultural and language barriers there is still the problem of interpreting the information which is the special preserve of the anthropologist. There was certainly an awareness of the process of adaptation needed to contextualise the indigenous wisdom evidenced here in this quote from Theo.

Theo: "But all based as I say on observing indigenous cultures and taking part in some indigenous ways and then sort of adapting them into this model so that they can be brought into a context that will work for us in the West if you like, that's it in a nutshell." **Int 5 54:14**

It was interesting to note that none of the community members involved in the AOMM indicated that they had any desire to make contact with indigenous people directly. This authoritative source, so distant yet tangible, for the anthropologist at least, can be contrast with the way Eco-Paganism borrows or appropriates religious and spiritual concepts from pre-Christian cultures within Europe (Chapter 4.5). Religious concepts within Eco-Paganism and contemporary paganism are also distance from their authoritative source; however the gulf is a historical one and therefore dependant on upon archaeologists for knowledge about pre-Christian European cultures. Frequently the archaeological evidence which is uncovered is ambiguous and can be interpreted in several different ways

which are continually contested within academia (Hutton, 2000, p. 356). These often uncertain and tentative foundations have offered a platform for more imaginative writers to fill in the gaps (Hutton, 2000, p. 283). Additional to this creative element Eco-Pagans as individuals and groups interpret again and adapt the concepts for their own purposes.

8.4 Marion Bowman's Triangular Model

At this juncture I introduce Marion Bowman's triangular model which I briefly referred to earlier (Bowman, 2004). My primary purpose in using her model is to highlight in a visible way the discernible differences between the AOMM and the Eclectic and Eco-Pagan traditions. After applying Bowman's model to my context I will propose a new model that borrows from her three main components but is able to distinguish the significance of each component.

Bowman's model has three basic components, official religion, folk or vernacular religion¹¹⁴ and individual religion. Bowman uses her model to highlight the different component parts contained within one religious tradition. Identifying the 'Individual' and 'Vernacular' components has been particularly helpful in the study of contemporary religious practice where the emphasis has become increasingly orientated towards those realms (Davie, 1994). In Marion Bowman's own words....

“Official religion is concerned primarily with theology/philosophy and ritual, and is the aspect of religion which tends to receive more scholarly attention. Folk religion can be described as the 'totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of official religion' (Yoder, 1974, p. 14), a vast but comparatively neglected field. The individual component is basically each person's

¹¹⁴ Bowman later exchanged the term folk religion for vernacular religion to accommodate alternative spiritualities. She describes the vernacular approach as 'the refusal to privilege written over oral forms; the understanding that 'folk', 'popular' or 'unofficial' beliefs are an integral part of people's conceptual world and not simply wilful aberrations; the recognition that belief spills over into every aspect of behaviour; and the appreciation of the dynamic nature of tradition ' (Sutcliffe & Bowman, 2000, p. 6).

understanding of religion and the part it plays in his or her life. In order to comprehend religion in its broadest sense it is necessary to appreciate how official, folk and individual ideas and behaviour interact with each other”(Bowman, 2004, pp. 5-6).

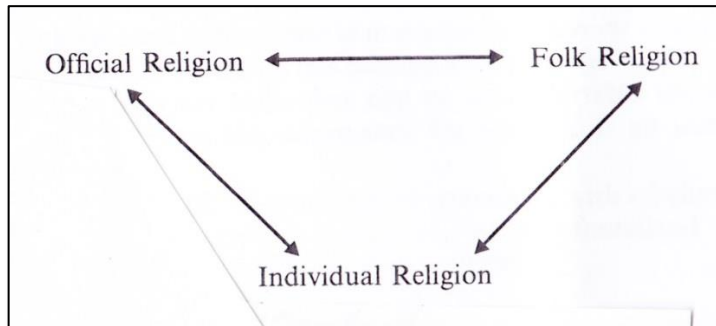


Figure 4. Marion Bowman's triangular model (2004, p. 6)

Bowman uses the model then to highlight different aspects within a single religious tradition, emphasising that all three components are in play and interacting with one another, this indicated by the two way arrows. I propose using the model in a more limited and slightly different manner to highlight the differences *between* the three spiritual traditions identified within the rural context. I have selected the specific theme of 'authority' hoping to uncover possible foundations for the community discourse (Hinnells, 2005, p. 2). I consider this theme to be relevant not only in relation to spirituality but also to political ideology an extension which I will explain in detail below.

In relation to spiritual traditions and the theme of authority Bowman's model is transformed thus:-

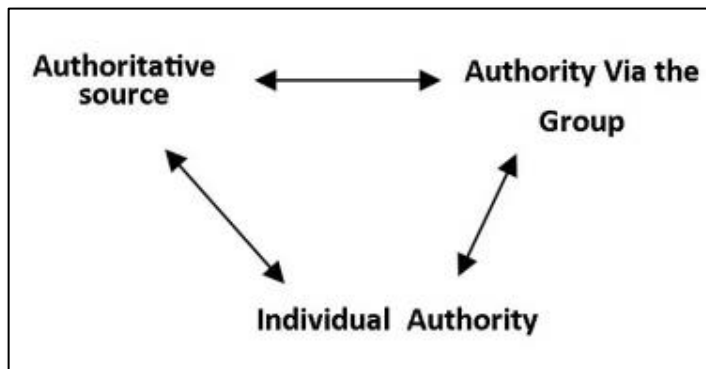


Figure 5. Marion Bowman's triangular model adapted to the theme of religious authority

I echo Bowman in emphasising that to some degree no matter how small all components are relevant within a single spiritual tradition (Bowman, 2004, p. 6). I will now comment on how each of the three identifiable spiritual traditions outlined within Chapter 5.6, Eco-Pagan, Eclectic and Core Shamanism (developing), map onto this adapted triangular model. Firstly the Eclectic.

8.4.1 Eclectic

The authority of the *individual* within alternative spiritualities is frequently highlighted as a dominant feature (Heelas, 1996, p. 21). This feature is often contrasted with traditional orthodox religion and subsequently framed as a traditionalised/detraditionalised spectrum (Harris, 2008, p. 124; Taylor, 2005, p. 557). It may have been no accident then that Bowman developed the triangular model whilst researching religious traditions within Glastonbury with its notoriety for alternative spiritual traditions. However another distinctive feature of alternative spiritualities and Eclectics as I have termed the expression at Raven Hill and Yosemite, is that the authoritative source is significant but multiple. The combination of personal spiritual experience and the borrowing of various official authoritative sources is a distinct feature for the majority of those practising an alternative spiritual tradition. In terms of authority, which is my chosen theme, the official received tradition or authoritative source is lessened by the fact that any number of sources or traditions may be adopted. Additionally the authoritative source is diminished further by the frequency in which the practice of traditions are, over time, dropped or synchronised with another authoritative tradition. Hence although significant in many aspects, the authoritative source remains minor when compared to the authority of the individual.

It has been claimed that this emphasis on the individual authority, sometimes termed 'selfishness' (Heelas, 1996, p. 214) lessens the ability of the Eclectic to relate to communal groups. However research by Jon Bloch has challenged this assumption asserting that the group experience is significant for people practising alternative spiritual traditions (Bloch, 1998b).¹¹⁵ A distinction should be made here about the makeup of the

¹¹⁵ Sutcliffe and Bowman also question Heelas's claims maintaining that 'combinations of self-centred and selfless practices can coexist in the

groups and context of Bloch's research. His focus is on alternative spiritual traditions as practiced within mainstream culture of the USA. The people whom he interviewed were members of a number of different spiritual groups, some being only temporary in the sense of coming together for a course of teaching (Bloch, 1998b, p. 288). In terms of my theme, authority, the influence of the group is lessened then by the number of groups interacted with and the time spent within each group. This can be contrasted with environmental communities where community members live closely together in one group over long periods of time. The veracity of the Eclectic living long-term within Raven Hill and Yosemite certainly challenges these assumptions of selfishness (Heelas, 1996, p. 214). It is important to consider the environmental community grouping in relation to the Eclectic spiritual tradition. Although Eclectic's share their beliefs and practices with other community members there is no compulsion for the group to either adopt or adapt their religious beliefs. Their beliefs tended to be acknowledged by other community members but were neither challenged nor adopted. The group aspects in terms of spirituality are therefore not significant, hence their tendency to link with other spiritual groups within the local towns, a practice which I discussed above. I need to make it clear that the Eclectic is not necessarily taking a lesser part within the general communal life; they are in fact taking full part within community life. However in respect to spiritual traditions, and specifically authority, the influence of the group is minor.

8.4.2 Eco-Pagan

To understand the Eco-Pagan approach to spirituality one also needs to understand its integration with the political realm, more specifically the EDA movement and the 1990s road protests, as detailed in Chapter 4.5. I want to therefore begin with Andy Letcher's analysis of spirituality within that social movement.

"A distinct protest culture emerged which was derived from the relatively harsh lifestyle of protest camps, and whilst not all protesters had spiritual inclinations, the movement was infused with a pagan sensibility. Eco-Paganism as it is called, combines ideas from Wicca and Druidry, the New Age, Buddhism and Theosophy, with anarchist

New Age and that the distinction between inner and outer sources of authority is not always clear' (Sutcliffe & Bowman, 2000, p. 171).

politics, feminism, and 1960s psychedelia, all with an itinerant lifestyle incorporating green radicalism and direct action. It is a syncretic religion which gives primacy to lived experience, and is therefore hard to define or describe. Lacking any formal structures or hierarchies, it is, though, a perfect example of the vernacular religion..... It is very much a religion of the people, which has emerged from the community of protesters and their collective stories. Stories are extremely important to the formation and maintenance of vernacular spiritualities. Eco-Paganism is shaped, not by books or charismatic leaders, but by the language spoken and by the myths and narratives shared around the campfires, the hearths of the protest camps.” (Letcher, 2001b, p. 148).

Letcher explains clearly here the features that classify Eco-Paganism as vernacular and indeed goes further by suggesting the geographical location of its formation, namely around the campfire. Another useful aspect of Bowman’s triangular model is its potential application to the political sphere. Social movements generally and the EDA movement in particular have an innate bias towards political understandings which are mediated within the small affinity-group. I would contend that the consensus decision-making process which involves all members in both rural communities is one visible political structure that indicates an authority orientated towards the affinity-group.¹¹⁶ As I have defined in Chapter 4 the EDA movement had an inherent resistance towards formal political organisation (Martell, 1994, p. 113; Pakulski, 1991, p. 164). This resistance was also prevalent within the interviews I conducted where community members either quickly left or in some cases had never been part of NGOs or formal political parties. Of course that did not signal an exit from political activism they were instead negotiated and practiced within the informal structures of the EDA movement, again commonly around the campfire, a sort of folk or vernacular politics if you like. It would only seem natural therefore to develop spiritual beliefs and practices in a similar manner. Letcher is again helpful here as he defines a ‘core pagan doxa’ existing within the Eco-Pagan tradition (2003, p. 67), one which can be considered a creation of the group. This emphasis on the group could perhaps explain the differences between the Eclectic

¹¹⁶ Other political traditions could be associated with the components on the triangular model. Anarchists - emphasising the individual, socialist - the group, conservative - the official political institution or tradition etc.

tradition with its wider inclusion of the esoteric traditions and the Eco-Pagan stance which although seemingly diverse is nevertheless maintaining a unified 'core pagan doxa', informally negotiated within the group. This method of transmission ensures that the 'core pagan doxa' remains hidden, occasionally verbalised but not documented or tightly defined.

It is also productive to reflect on the specific roles which people adopt within each spiritual practice, a distinct feature of Eco-Paganism is the minor role which the priestess or priest plays within the tradition (Harris, 2008, p. 175; Letcher, 2001b, p. 149). This can also be identified within environmental communities by the rotation of the leading role within communal ceremony, a practice in operation at both Raven Hill and Yosemite. The lack of a recognised leader, theologian or elder (office holder), contrasts with the structured approach displayed in the AOMM.

As the interviews at Raven Hill and Yosemite have revealed, the individual spiritual experience could not be described as insignificant in Eco-Paganism. It could be argued that within environmental communities it is becoming more significant as evidenced by the development of the integrated spiritual practice discussed in Chapter 5.4.1. The individual was also significant within the EDA movement with its preferred tactic of direct action. Frequently the body became the site, location and focus of the political struggle (Seel et al., 2000, p. 70). However this importance is somewhat balanced out by the central role played by the affinity-group. It was rare that such direct action was employed by lone individuals. (Doherty, 2002, p. 54). This functional necessity to interact with a small group could perhaps explain the reluctance of the Eclectic to become fully committed to the direct action tactic.¹¹⁷

Finally it would be amiss of me not to mention the Eco-Pagan animosity towards official religion and traditional politics. This is best summarised by the manner which the word dogma is used. Within Raven Hill Heidi saw one of her roles within the community as challenging dogma, fixedness of position or static entity as associated with official religion and politics (Bowman, 2004, p. 5). It is this fixedness of official religion that so challenges the spiritual development of the individual and the mediating process of the small group, the latter being the dominant features of Eco-

¹¹⁷ The relative political inactivity of the 'Eclectic' (alternative spiritualities) has been previously commented upon see... (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 108; Plows, 2002, p. 113).

Paganism. This substantial resistance to both official political and religious dogma cannot be overstated. In asserting this I do not want to leave the reader with the impression that the official components are therefore insignificant, anything but. The relationship between social movement and the institutional status quo is, as I have outlined in Chapter 2, a complex one, as conflict often reveals a deeper level of relationship than perhaps would be consciously recognised. On a more positive note, official fixedness of the religious concept, in this case historical, does play some part in the Eco-Pagan tradition for example concepts associated with pre-Christian Indo-European religion. The authoritative source does seem to be particularly relevant here; however the archaeological evidence to construct a detailed religious tradition based on these ancient cultures is limited (Bowman, 1993, p. 148). Furthermore the contentious nature of interpreting the slender archaeological evidence and oral traditions offers ample scope for the Eco-Pagan to adopt and adapt the religious concept to suit the movement's particular needs, namely engendering energy and inspiration for political action (Plows, 2002, p. 115).

A historical perspective on this vernacular dynamic is by its very nature difficult to outline, nonetheless it is worth noting some major developments. Hutton and Luhrmann are particularly helpful here in recognising the forms of contemporary paganism existing prior to the 1990s road protests (Hutton, 2000, p. 278; Luhrmann, 1989, p. 5). These early contemporary pagan movements had begun to be conflated with political concerns in the 1970s & 80's. Again developments in the USA were influential (Hutton, 2000, p. 340), Starhawk in particular sought to fuse the two realms of nature-centred spirituality and contemporary political concern. Her books *Spiral Dance* and *Dreaming the dark : magic, sex & politics*, published in 1979 and 1982 respectively, signalled the start of a new genre of literature orientating spiritual practice towards political action, this being predominantly framed within a feminist identity (Epstein, 1991, p. 183; Greenwood, 2000, p. 109; Starhawk, 1979, p. 225). Interestingly the final Chapter of *Spiral Dace* was entitled 'creating religion', perhaps indicating a level of reflexivity about the process of borrowing and adapting. It is therefore most likely then that the bulk of borrowing and adaption had already take place before the 1990s road protests had started. Nevertheless further borrowing is likely to have taken place in relation to ancient European cultures emphasising deities such as Odin and Thor and particular spiritual practices such as Sami shamanism (Taylor, 2005, p. 557). Again it is most likely that such religious concepts were seen through the filters of earlier movements in this case

German romanticism (Hutton, 2000, p. 21). Notwithstanding these historical influences, I still consider Eco-paganism to be vernacular in nature and would point to the way group ritual and practice¹¹⁸ in particular were radically adapted suit the political context (Letcher, 2002, p. 86).

8.4.3 Core Shamanism (developing)

I have already identified above some of the differences between Core Shamanism and the AOMM and in so doing have commented on the official nature of that particular spiritual tradition. This can therefore be briefly summarised as follows:- the authoritative source is significant, this source relates to knowledge and wisdom located in indigenous cultures both past and present, this constitutes a received tradition which is difficult to question. The conduit for acquiring such knowledge and wisdom is via the mentoring relationship with the notion of lineage having great currency. The Ancestors, Tom Brown, Jon Young, the Elders, Group Facilitators etc... are distinguished one from another offering a clear organisational structure, official office holders with formal roles. When the group is gathered it is concerned primarily with the program: unlike the Eco-Pagan grouping, the religious notion is not open to major adaption - any attempt to do so would be considered inauthentic¹¹⁹, disrespectful to the ancestors and elders. The group religious experience is therefore also very important with unity being maintained by the group structure and program. Group ceremony is central with the whole gathering being considered 'one big ceremony' (Int 5 49:00), repetitive songs are employed to assist the group's worship. However in terms of authority, my chosen theme, the group has minimal scope to exert power in relation to altering the religious concepts being used. The group interactions are predominantly concerned with the program and therefore the received tradition. The ecstatic experience of the group is essentially founded on the cohesiveness of the group, this in turn being a result of

¹¹⁸ Also relevant here is group organisation and the lead up to group ritual, the informal methods of Eco-paganism discussed earlier starkly contrast with the process of 'initiation' either into the craft or coven which are commonly practiced within many forms of contemporary paganism.

¹¹⁹ See Pike for further comments on the contested notion of 'authentic' within Native America spiritualities (Pike, 2001, p. 127).

adhering to the received tradition, hence the emphasis is shifted back from the group onto the received tradition.

The personal spiritual experience is also essential to this tradition. The individual's connection and interaction with nature forms a major element of the program. The overwhelming intensity of this nature connection cannot be overstated however this epiphany or enlightenment in fact only reinforces the authority of the received tradition in that it confirms in a real and direct way the wisdom of the mentor, or received tradition.

Having commented on the three different traditions I suggest that it is possible to sum up the way each tradition is using religious concepts thus:-

The religious concept is.....

In Core Shamanism (developing): Adopted and adhered to under the instruction of the elder or mentor

In Eco-Paganism: Adopted and adapted via mediation within the small group for political purposes.

In the Eclectic: Adopted and adapted to suit individual needs as interpreted by the individual, often evolving from significant to minor as further traditions are adopted.

Marian Bowman has proposed that her triangular model be rearranged to reflect the dominance of the 'Individual' component within contemporary society. She has suggested that 'Individual religion' component be moved to the top inferring some degree of importance from top to bottom (Bowman, 2004, p. 16). Similarly I would like to proposed a new model that reflects importance of each component. A method to visually express the dominance of each component within each spiritual tradition thereby being able to compare the three traditions. I have therefore used concentric circles to indicate the significance of each component, the more concentric circles the greater the significance. The diagrams below then represent the significance of authority within each component for the three spiritual traditions.

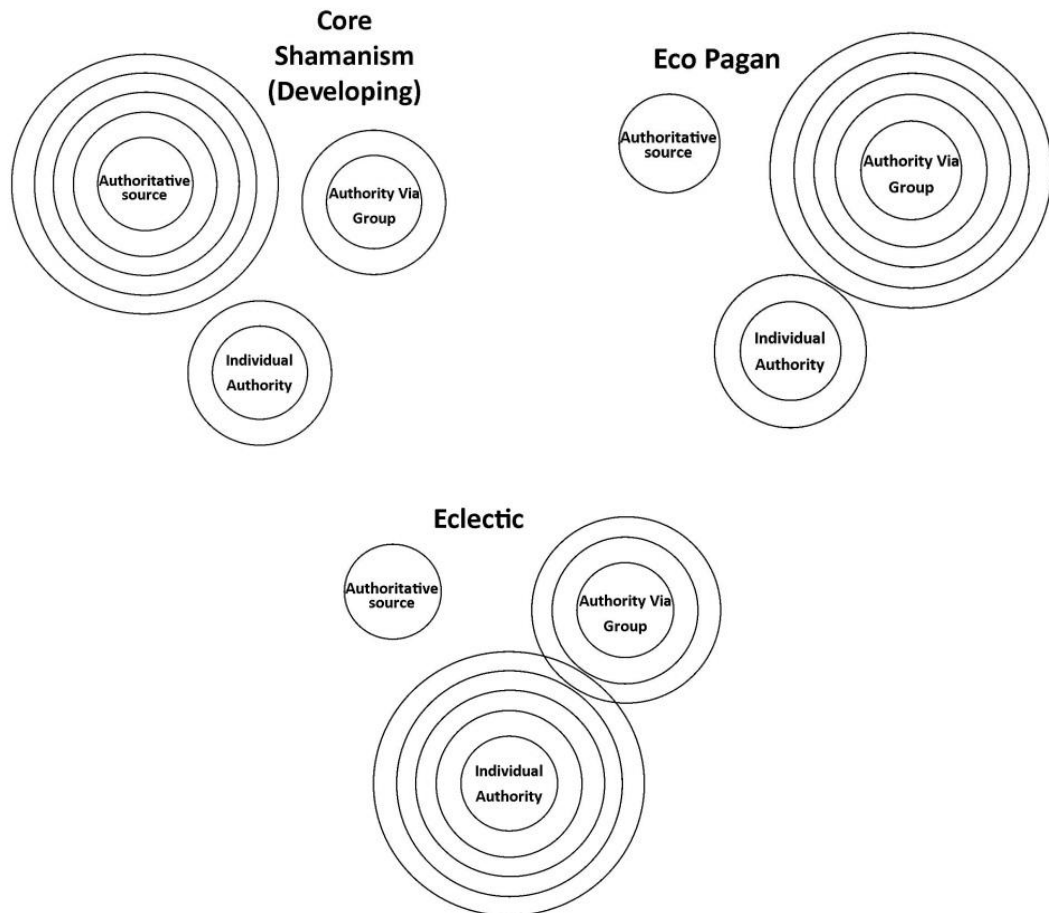


Figure 6. Model indicating the degree of authoritative sources

8.5 Conclusions

What I have described in this Chapter is a clear distinction between Core Shamanism (developing) and the Eclectic, Eco-Pagan traditions. The EDA movement and related social movements thereafter were, and are, familiar with the 'individual' and 'group' components in respect to spirituality. However the arrival of Core Shamanism (developing) with its strong 'official' (authoritative source) component can be considered to be radically different. This I contend is at the heart of the second community discourse within Raven Hill and Yosemite. It is not only the *number* of community members uniting and joining this tradition that is threatening but also the *essence* or to be more precise the official essence of the tradition that is causing concern (Int 6 54:10). This new and developing tradition is not only divergent from Eco-Paganism and the Eclectic spiritual traditions but also challenges the dominant pluralistic ethic. The community members that claim no spiritual tradition, that is the non-religious, are also likely to react negatively towards

an official component either political or religious. The establishing of a spiritual tradition on such a strong 'official' foundation could be considered a move towards a religious, structured and organised tradition (Berger, 1967, pp. 133-134). If spirituality then is defined by an individual or vernacular group dynamic, it would seem what I have plotted in this instance is a journey from an alternative spiritual approach to a more organised religious tradition. Considering the historic development of environmental communities as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 it would seem very improbable that such a development could take place, one that would be so counter to the wider environmental movements and cultic milieu. Consequently I would concur with Fran from Yosemite, that a unified spiritual tradition is unlikely to come about at either Raven Hill or Yosemite (Int 23 5:00). If AOMM, or for that matter any similar unified spiritual tradition, is to progress within environmental communities it will in all probability need to cut ties with the social movement that gave birth to environmental communities in the first place, becoming less leaky by adopting a retreat communes format (Kanter, 1972, p. 175).

Although such a move has not yet come about it has been interesting to note within this Chapter the aspirations and attempts by some community members to journey from an alternative spiritual approach to a more organised, unified religious tradition. This may, in part, be related to the functional aspects of unified religion, aspects that bond community members together. I will in the next chapter address the theme of community bonding directly, I will suggest that homogenising forces may be compelling environmental communities to search for a more united focus. The tensions that I highlighted here around religion and spirituality represent an important element within the key findings in Chapter 10, they add complexity to the assertion that environmental communities are generally heterogeneous in relation to religion and spirituality (Scott, 1990).

~ Chapter 9 ~ The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Community Bonding

9.1 Introduction

In this penultimate chapter I will build upon the analysis of Chapters 5 to 8 by addressing a very functional aspect of community life, namely what is bonding community members together? To capture the full picture surrounding my focus I will be approaching it in a very general way, hence I will include political and philosophical ideologies as well as my main focus religion and spirituality. In choosing such a theme I will be following a tradition within the academic study of communes more generally (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 152; Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 100; Rigby, 1974a, p. 8), I will make occasional reference to their findings throughout this Chapter. Also during my endeavour I will weave in some of the observations I have made thus far in the hope of offering up an explanation of what role religious and spiritual traditions are playing in communal life. I will be relying mostly on the interviews as my source material and will be continuing my pattern of dealing with urban and rural contexts separately. Towards the end of each section I will comment on the movement and changes in relation to what is bonding the environmental community together. Finally I will relate my findings to wider social theories and speculate what may transpire in the coming years for the three environmental communities.

9.2 Community Bonding at Brecon (Urban)

In a very general manner I enquired about what members at Brecon thought was bonding their community together. Many community members made reference to their shared history in the 1990s road protests.

Jan: "At Brecon we all come from, mostly come from a tradition of environmental activism." **Int 29 59:13**

Toby: "Back then that it was what, [incoherent speech] that is what I would have said brought us together [environmental activism] and now that is not what unites people." **Int 33 28:50** [brackets mine]

I have already noted in Chapter 3 this bonding aspect which indeed drew many environmental activists together to form environmental communities as the 1990s road protests dissipated. What is relevant here though is the

degree of environmental ideology that has continued and how it may have changed. When asked most environmental communities will identify as 'ecological' or 'environmental', or use terms with some ecological connection such as 'permaculture' or 'connecting people to the land'.¹²⁰ Brecon publicly states its ideological focus as 'ecological and anarchist'. This multiple focus is confirmed here in this quote by Jan, who adds in the term 'liberal'.

Jan: "I mean at Brecon we all come from, mostly come from a tradition of environmental activism ... When I joined that was most certainly the glue holding the Co-op together, we are not particularly active at the moment, ... Although we are all sympathetic to environmental activism, we're just quite busy at the moment [breaks out into laughter] the glue is still there in terms of you know our ideas on it erm ... In terms of our political views they are fairly similar to each other."

Interviewer: "Which you would say are?"

Jan: "Well sort of liberal in kind of, terms of erm [pause] sort of being tolerant of other peoples and cultures erm, caring for the environment erm, trying to tread lightly on the planet, trying to be non-hierarchical, trying to be responsible for oneself, [pause] I suppose we all have an element of sympathising with anarchist politics in terms of taking responsibility for your own activity, trying to respect things and people yeah." **Int 29 59:13**

These political ideologies were not the only ones discussed in the interviews. Ben also made reference to socialist influences within the community (Int 30 31:40). A similar amalgamation to this was recognised by David Pepper in the early development of green communities which he summarised as 'green/anarchist/socialist' (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 101). I highlight here the pluralist ethic that must be operating to allow such a collection of political ideologies to coexist in one small community. In relation to the whole communal grouping then there seems to be a resistance to adopting a single political or environmental ideology. Also it appeared that some community members (individually) were relating to a number of political concepts. This coexistence of political and environmental ideologies for an individual can be compared to the eclectic approach to spirituality which I have outlined in

¹²⁰ See Diggers and Dreamers website 'ideological focus' category.

Chapter 5. However the sources that were being drawn upon here were much fewer, usually two or three political or environmental ideologies by each community member. Even so within these multiple ideologies, perhaps better termed in relation to the individual, personal identities, community members did express preferences. For example Wilma in her interview made it clear that she is “more people than environment” (Int 34 16:58) and conversely Jed felt the community is “moving more towards environment” at this moment (Int 31 27:35). The distinctions I am describing here appeared partly ambiguous and this was furthered by another factor. I became aware during the interviews that most community members preferred a less labelled and explicit approach when discussing political or environmental ideologies.¹²¹ There seemed a real reluctance to identify even loosely with any political or environmental label (Int 30 31:40). This consequently appeared to weaken the cohesive bonding aspects of any particular political or environmental ideology. Yet at the same time it could not be said that the ideology was any less significant for the individual.¹²² This phenomenon was also discernible within the 1970s communes movement in the UK (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 11; Rigby, 1974a, p. 194).

In the quote I used earlier from Toby’s interview he clearly inferred that a change had taken place in that environmental activism was what had united Brecon in the past but that was not now the case. So what was bonding the Brecon community together beyond the multiple ambiguously labelled political and environmental ideologies already described? What emerged during the interviews was a clear articulation by the community members that working and living together were in their opinion central. It appeared

¹²¹ A reluctance to label could also be discerned at the national level in that within the Diggers and Dreamers web site, community descriptions, many communities stated ‘None’ in the ‘ideological focus’ section or alternatively left it blank.

¹²² Plows’ analysis of the EDA movement could be relevant here in that it appears very similar to my findings, she explains that “there are no clearly defined tenets of EDA ‘green’ ideology, and movement ideology is best understood when appreciated as working similarly to the process of collective identity (see also Bevir 2000:280 cited in Doherty 2002: 85). Radical green ideology per se and here the ideology of the EDA movement is pluralist, diffuse, shifting, with many different positions and weights of emphases (ecofeminist, spiritual/deep ecologist, anarchist) while also retaining core principles” (Plows, 2002, p. 127).

then community members were bonding around relational and normative practices within the community and the local area. Hence community members mentioned the bonding effects of communal workdays (Int 33 36:36) and holidaying together. Here Jed was asked what was bonding the members of Brecon together.

Jed: “Erm work, [short laugh], working together, like the greatest, the thing I always kind of realised is that if you do a job with some people, either that or you go on holiday with people and you end up as a group with an agenda that everyone is involved in, so like having work days here and when everyone is therefore together in that [short interruption] environment there is a common interest and there is a goal to aim at, then you seem to learn loads more about people than you would do normally and it really binds people together, that common interest, the striving to get something done, to get the job done or whatever.... and people feel they are part of it.” **Int 31 17:11**

The following can also be added to this, doing everyday hobbies together such as cycling and climbing (Int 29 107:04), celebrations, dancing and getting drunk together (Int 32 33:21). The communal meals were cited by almost all those interviewed as bonding the community together (Int 29 105:20 & Int 32 29:23 & Int 33 40:46 & Int 34 43:38). However what was eaten at the meals was not so straightforward, Toby who prefers vegan food explains the tensions here.

Toby: “We are a vegetarian co-op,... Most of the people at Brecon now eat meat but we are still a vegetarian co-op so they don't eat it, we eat vegetarian.... I'm trying to be, I am mostly vegan at the moment but I am not insisting other people cook vegan because I think it's quite, I think it can be quite divisive if people rigidly stick to difficult diets, like in the past when we have had members who were vegan, gluten intolerant and insisted on that, I think that's quite er, a divisive thing.. Some people are very very passionate about strict veganism, I think it is important to be pragmatic.” **Int 33 39:10**

All these activities seem to be arranged by informal verbal consensus, usually between two or more members that meant everyone had a stake and say in the organisation of the community (Int 33 47:29). On a less regular basis the formal consensus decision process played a part. Ben articulates this interrelationship well in the following quote.

Ben: “There is the semiformal procedures for making decisions but actually in reality you interact on a daily basis about the conditions of life here and you are constantly engaged in debate and discussion about stuff, so everybody has a high level of consciousness about the place and it's something we are constantly thinking and talking about and I think that level of, kind of, active participation in, but just active thinking about and wanting to be involved in the day-to-day running of the place is on the microscale the kind of political engagement I would like to see replicated on a much bigger scale.” **Int 30 21:26**

This consensus principle appeared to bind community members together through multiple actions and emotions enacted each and every day. Consciously or unconsciously, these actions were understood, interpreted and negotiated in real-time, as they happened (Melucci, 1996, p. 383). Although such bonding was understood as ‘less about identity and just people getting on’ (Int 34 31:34), it can nonetheless be considered comparable to the EDA movement which was ‘intuitively anarchist’ (McKay, 1998, p. 14). It can be further located within anarchist political theory. It may be associated with the form of anarchism that borrows from the ‘Situationists’ who insisted that every individual should construct their own situation, moment by moment.¹²³ A particular target of this movement was the division between work and play, this a dynamic which is constantly challenged at Brecon. Such forms of anarchism are susceptible to becoming very individualistic in their expression and therefore would not be fully reflective of communal life at Brecon. The communal and socialist forms of anarchism (anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism) would therefore capture this aspect of community life better (Eckersley, 1992, p. 160; Marshall, 1992, p. 640). Within this tradition the individual anarchist chooses to cooperate with other members and nature, they choose to abide by the social structures that they cooperatively agree together. Even though such a pattern of community life may be located within an ideological framework it is important to note that it was not explicitly articulated as such within the community.

¹²³ “They called themselves the Situationists precisely because they believed that all individuals should construct the situations of their lives and realise their own potential and obtain their own pleasure.” (Marshall, 1992, p. 552) also see (Gordon, 2008, p. 39; Wall, 2005, p. 136).

The movement towards bonding around relational and normative practices within the community is not without its drawbacks. The emphasis on agreement with other members moment by moment, so to speak, lacks the future dimension, inherent within long-standing ideological concepts (Zablocki, 1980, p. 248 & 249).¹²⁴ This then, in terms of Brecon recruiting new members, could be a particular problem. Toby here expresses his worries which I would maintain relate to this dynamic.

Interviewer: “But you don't particularly perceive its [other community members ideology] focused on environmentalism?”

Toby: “No... It has been historically and that's where we've come from but I don't know where we are going to be honest.”

Interviewer: “It seems to be becoming more eclectic, that the life experience here is more central?”

Toby: “Yes”

Interviewer: “So in that sense it's more accepting of diversity?”

Toby: “Yeah maybe... I would also add that I don't think it's a good thing, I feel worried about, I think I see it as a loss of identity, I think there is less holding us together now, and how we are going to maintain an identity in the future as we are taking in new members.”

Int 33 126:10 ¹²⁵ [brackets mine]

Toby clarified later in the interview, that having had time to reflect on it, in his view it was not that community members were becoming more ideologically diverse but simply becoming more apolitical (Int 33 130:18), the effect is nonetheless the same, a reduced role within the community for an explicit unified ideological focus. I will discuss the communal tensions raised by this development at Brecon towards the end of this Chapter.

¹²⁴ At the movement level George McKay has highlighted the vulnerability of focussing on immediacy (1998, p. 14), he expresses particular concern about environmental movements drifting towards eco-fascism calling for ‘reflection on difficult questions such as organisation, coherence of ideology’(1998, p. 44).

¹²⁵ A further concern may also be relevant here in that the physical improvements within Brecon were nearing completion and if the common task was partly responsible for the community bonding, what of the next period when such seemingly urgent tasks were not necessary?

Another indication of shifting ideology and priorities can be observed in Brecon's current stance towards the Radical Routes network (see Chapter 3.4.4). The Radical Routes network requires that member communities dedicate a given period of time to political activism and social change. This certainly reflected the aims and activities at Brecon some years ago. They were directly involved in political and environmental actions at both national and local level. Their association with anarchist ideology was also much more labelled and explicit. Recently as outlined above, they have switched their tactics in that they are now working towards such aims via carefully selected employment (Int 30 44:20). Additionally they have spent considerable time and energy on the buildings and organic allotments. These improvements, may be considered political with a small 'p'. They were completed for the benefit of the present and future members, for the activism that they will undertake as individuals within the community. This approach has indeed led to a tangible form of community appreciated by all who have been part of the transformation. In short, their focus has become increasingly local; energy and resources are spent locally at the expense of national campaigns within the wider movement.¹²⁶ It could be said they have shifted their environmental and social focus from *Gesellschaft* to *Gemeinschaft* (see Chapter 3.5.1). The limited context of this study does not allow me to distinguish if Brecon is exceptional in this or other communities are also developing in a similar direction. If they are dissimilar to others co-ops in the Radical Routes network there is a real possibility that Brecon will break ties or if not they will surely advocate for reforming the prevailing structures of the Radical Routes network to accommodate their newly adopted pattern of activism.

¹²⁶ Alex Plows has suggested shifts such as this were part of a strategic development "A noticeable strategic development by the mid/late 90's was a move to more locally based, 'community' actions by protesters keen to build on grassroots ties, slightly shifting the focus away from national campaigns." (2002, p. 52). I have not detected any national strategies either from the interviews or from the literature I reviewed. I therefore suggest it was more a pragmatic development guided by the instincts of small-scale groups than a wider intentional strategic policy.

9.2.1 Religion and Spirituality, Bonding and Functional Aspects in the Urban Context

In all the discussions surrounding what bonds the community together not one community member from Brecon referred even tangentially to religion and spirituality. Given my findings in Chapter 6.3 regarding religion and spirituality this should not come as a surprise. I did however deliberately steer the conversations to address directly the cohesive function of religion and spirituality within Brecon. These two short quotes from Tess and Jan pretty much sum up the general response.

Interviewer: "Spirituality what sort of role is that playing?"

Tess: "Don't think there is one."

Interviewer: "There isn't one?"

Tess: "No, there are certain people here who I just won't talk to about spirituality because it would make them angry and it's private, it's personal." **Int 32 1:08:00**

Interviewer: "Are there spiritual traditions here?"

Jan: "At Brecon?"

Interviewer: "Yeah."

Jan: "[pause] Err no."

Interviewer: "Nothing group wise?"

Jan: "No, definitely not." **Int 29 1:15:07**

Before accepting this seemingly obvious conclusion I want to address two sources of evidence that complicate it slightly. Firstly during his interview Ben, when questioned directly, articulated that he believed spirituality did in fact play an important role within the Brecon community.

Ben: "Like I say we all have a good underlying spiritual commitment, as it were to a, to doing things with little an environmental impact, for example, and as a good social impact as possible. And that's all motivated by a set of spiritual beliefs I suppose that we each have as individuals, but actually they are quite private I think, to members, so although it's quite important to each member I think for the co-op its, yeah, invisible, I would say, maybe that's the wrong word, but it's not at the forefront." **Int 30 49:02**

In many respects this quote reinforces my conclusions in Chapter 6 that explicit expressions of beliefs surrounding spirituality are not welcome and articulated in the social realm. But what can be made of Ben's strong claim about all community members being motivated by a set of spiritual beliefs, albeit they are individual? The key to understanding Ben's quote can be found earlier in the interview where he defined his own spirituality which relates primarily to experiences in nature and particular edifying moments.

Ben: "Scenes in nature basically, places I have been you know, like there is a cave on the coast of [County] that is something that is in my mind, like it's a religious experience and that time I had in the [National Park] in the snow at night that is to me kind of yeah, a spiritual thing I guess." **Int 30 39:14**

He went on to explain that he felt no particular need or desire to associate religious beliefs or any other understanding (either meta-empirical or otherwise) to these experiences. It would make sense then if what he was referring to here as spirituality was simply experiences within nature, these being similar in essence to the conception of 'participation' as explained in Chapter 6.3.3. Many community members in the urban context expressed the positive benefits of experiencing nature. There is nevertheless no communal discourse surrounding what members may believe or understand by such experiences. From the interviews it was clear that at least one or two members did associate spiritual understandings, of the meta-empirical form, to their experiences of nature but what is evidently clear is that such beliefs should be kept private, in the 'inner' and 'personal' realms. Were these members to express their beliefs in the 'social realm' they would no doubt be accepted in a pluralistic sense i.e. one view among many. However in no sense could this be considered unifying or bonding for the community as a whole.

The other consideration I want to explore relates to body practices associated with Eastern religious traditions. If as I have outlined earlier community bonding takes place around the actions of community members then body practices and meditation undertaken by them may also be a source of community bonding. The first thing to note is that not all community members partook in such practices. Although most of the members knew who was practising these traditions, for example tai chi, kung fu or yoga etc..., Some members were not particularly interested beyond the general description of the practice. Furthermore such practices were rarely conducted with other community members or indeed within the social realm

of Brecon. So although potentially significant for the individual and possibly understood by some members as spiritual, such practices could not be deemed cohesive for the community as a whole.

Having considered these factors above I would maintain that both religion and spirituality have no cohesive bonding function for the Brecon community. If they have no cohesive bonding functions then within the community could they in fact exert an influence in reverse? Could ideologies associated with religion and spirituality be divisive within such communities? Whilst discussing religion and spirituality an interesting anecdote was relayed to me about another environmental community which had a very similar orientation to Brecon. Here I ask Tyrone if spirituality could be divisive in community life?

Tyrone: "I have heard of it anecdotally."

Interviewer: "In other communities?"

Tyrone: "Yeah [community name] in [Southwest UK] apparently half the membership there have found God and become new, born-again Christians er, which just hearing that sounded like really scary to me, if I was living in the community and suddenly half the people, the connotations of born-again Christianity are quite a, quite evangelical, aggressive sort of thing." **Int 35 40:29**

Clearly for Tyrone such a development would be considered divisive to the extent where he may be forced to leave the community. It is interesting to note however that Tyrone did express earlier in his interview that it was easier to accommodate community members' spiritual beliefs as opposed to religious beliefs as they were less fixed, vaguer and easier to accommodate.

Tyrone: "I think it's easier to be tolerant of something that's a bit vague, than something that's fixed, like somebody has a particular God or pantheon of gods or something it's easier to, identify logical flaws in, in the makeup and pick on it but if you have a more vague spirituality then it's, yeah it's less susceptible to anyone being able to dismiss it really."

Interviewer: "And that helps in community?"

Tyrone: "Definitely yeah." **Int 35 37:17**

This indicates something distinctly different in the way religion, as opposed to spirituality, functions within small communities, these differences I have elaborated upon in Chapter 1 & 8.

In this next quote Jed identifies a bonding which very much chimes with the wider social movement. It is the bonding formed by being against something, namely religion, especially strongly organised forms of religion.

Jed: “I think that everyone is pretty much, well everyone is definitely an atheist [the word atheist was not actually fully pronounced], no one has a faith... Yeah we’re fairly nonreligious er which in itself would bind us together.” **Int 31 37:26** [brackets mine]

If Jed is correct in his estimation of community members’ attitudes then this may be coupled with Tyrone’s comments above about religion. These two observations together may explain why religion in its organised form is largely absent in the urban context and that spirituality is, conversely, partially present in the inner, and personal realms (see Chapter 6.3.1).

In summary then what can be said about community bonding in the urban context? Firstly it is evident that community members at Brecon have developed from being strongly associated with the EDA movement and the 1990s road protests to a position where such associations no longer bond the members together. The political ideologies of anarchism and socialism were evident however they appear in some respects to be weakening in their ability to bond community members together. Environmental concerns on a global scale, such as Co2 emissions, still occupy the members time and energy but importantly their focus has shifted to the local context. They are striving to make a difference at the individual and small group level, seeking fulfilling and worthwhile employment that aligns with their environmental principles.

Taken together then anarchism, socialism and global environmentalism formed an eclectic political mix that can in fact be linked with David Pepper’s findings in the 1990s (1991). This eclectic approach then resulted in considerable resistance to adopting a single comprehensive political or environmental ideology. It appeared that community members were instead selecting particular strands, notions or symbols from past political ideologies and discussing them in the social realm.

What was expressed most powerfully throughout the interviews was the bonding effect of just simply living and socialising together. The daily vegetarian evening meal and socialising together afterwards was cited as particularly significant (Oved, 2013, p. 252). To this can be added the practical work days, sharing hobbies and holidaying together. These regular and habitual concerns were organised by the members as a whole, each

member in theory had an equal say in the ordering of the community life. The apparent shift of energy and focus away from national and international political concerns to local, personal, relational and normative practices should not be considered a withdrawal from ideas and thoughts altogether. Community members indeed expressed passion for ideas and ideologies however these were negotiated and embodied in the everyday action, in the present moment (Wenger, 1998, p. 231). In this respect such normative practices such as cycling, avoiding car use, preferring second hand clothes, eating vegan and vegetarian food, could be considered 'green scripts' (Horton, 2003, p. 68), that are enacted and invested with meaning (see Chapter 4.2). It may be more appropriate then to envisage actions and relations as the basis for ideation, moving from action and emotion to ideation. Colin Campbell has suggested such a dynamic may in time then form its own tradition.

“One might say that the ‘traditional’ emerges as a by-product of action itself, as a consequence of the Weberian processes of routinization, and that, once in existence, it accretes unto itself the authority which only simple repetition can bring. For what individuals do, and more significantly, what they have repeatedly done, will in their own eyes necessarily carry a degree of legitimation, since authority is grounded in action more than it is in the self. For action is not thought: it necessarily involves commitment and commitment carries its own form of authority.” (Campbell, 1996, p. 166).

In considering such normative practices it also becomes clear that Brecon is not pluralistic in terms of its cultural expression. In other words the maintenance of a pluralistic ethic, which ensures many political and environmental ideologies can coexist, does not necessarily secure plural forms of culture. It appears that the limitations of the community format do not permit such diversity. Bourdieu's concept of habitus as discussed in Chapter 1.2 can also be usefully applied here. It is likely that a united habitus prevails, one directed by daily agreements of the members rather than a particular ideology. The restrictions here then are yet another reason to examine carefully the cultural aspects of the community, for therein lies the essence of the community that is in reality agreed and practiced each and every day.

It was found that religion had no positive cohesive bonding function within Brecon and may even be considered highly divisive where present. In the negative sense it may be operating as a force to be resisted, thereby

unifying members against its tenets. Spirituality, understood as individual meta-empirical beliefs, likewise, had no bonding effect for community members. Such spiritual beliefs and practices, although tolerated at Brecon, were normally restricted to the inner and personal realms. Spirituality understood as Ben expressed it, namely personal interaction with nature or 'nature connection', may well form powerful individual motivations for each member. But such encounters are considered beyond explanation and are not developed into coherent ideologies that are traditionally associated with community bonding.

Where community members experience nature together, merging nature connection with social interaction, either on the allotments or when partaking in leisure activities in the countryside, these experiences may well functionally bond community members, nourishing their social cohesion, forming a distinct social habitus. I will later in this Chapter outline in the rural context what I term 'organic embodied solidarity' (see Chapter 9.4.1) namely the bonding effect of community members assuming their experiences of 'nature connection' are similar. Given the intensity of this phenomenon in the rural context I hesitate to use the term here in the urban context, but having said that it may well be the same type of bonding but in a weaker form.

9.3 Community Bonding at Raven Hill and Yosemite (Rural)

I am combining both the rural communities together in this section as they were on the whole so similar in respect to what community members considered was bonding them together. Where there were differences between the two communities I will refer to them specifically. In a similar way to the urban context then I enquired what was bonding the rural communities together. In common with the urban context community members did mention their past history in the EDA movement and 1990s road protests. However this was not specifically mentioned as a past history that bonded community members together. Similarly in regard to politics, community members in the rural context made occasional references to anarchist ideology however this was in a very general way and was not referred to in relation to community cohesion. Given the overall place of political ideologies within the rural context, as discussed in Chapter 5.3.7, this should perhaps not have come as a surprise. What did surprise me however was that rural community members did not cite communal meals or vegan diet as a bonding aspect of community life. Considering the fact that Raven Hill was formed with a strict vegan food only policy and that half of the Yosemite

members were initially vegan, I did think it would feature in some form. This aspect of community life and any possible bonding effects may have been disrupted somewhat in the various compromises that have been made over the years surrounding food. I have commented earlier about the apparent tensions surrounding food (Chapter 5.3.6) and it may well be that the community members did not mention this aspect of community life as it was potentially divisive in terms of community cohesion.

At Yosemite in particular, community members mentioned the consensus decision-making process as bonding the community together (Int 21 20:08). This may, in part, have to do with the almost ritualising by some community members of the 'way of council' meetings (Int 23 2:00). Starla described the consensus process as being 'in process' or 'committed to process'. In fact she could not envisage much else bonding them together.

Starla: "When I speak about Yosemite I think I can honestly say I don't know that many common things that every single person here has that's holding it, except for the fact that there is a willingness to be in process maybe with it at the moment." **Int 20 1:38:58**

Not all community members emphasised this functional aspect as bonding them together and although mentioned in conversations it certainly lacked the gravity expressed within the Brecon community.

At both Raven Hill and Yosemite community members mentioned the bonding that arose from the challenging conditions of living on the land and its physical impact on the body. This seemed to be related to community work days as these aspects were frequently mentioned together as being cohesive. The frequency and passion in which communal workdays were discussed was equal to the urban context. In these next two quotes Heidi and Ingrid mention both aspects.

Heidi: "I really like the fact that we can go into town being really grubby and smelling of wood smoke and again it's just about like challenging what's normal and what's you know, and just saying this is normal for me, this is how I live and this is good, and I think yeah there is that shared thing that if you work really hard together, you know like as a group you physically, you know really get knackered but you have done something together that's really, yeah it's very unifying having that shared kind of experience and erm I think it can also be divisive if certain people are not erm working hard physically

and others are, and yeah that's definitely an issue as well.”

Int 7 21:46

When Heidi goes to town there is no doubt what community she belongs to. It would take a great deal of effort to disguise the everyday reality of living in a low-impact community, the impressions on the body and clothes. In this respect she is physically alternative to the local surrounding culture. Heidi's passion for communal workdays is also evident and it is interesting that she chose to highlight the disunity caused by community members doing different degrees of physical work. This aspect can be related to spirituality as well in that she stated later in her interview that some community members who were more spiritually focused were 'too busy being spiritual and better than you to actually just get on and do some work' (Int 7 15:05). Tensions expressed here probably relate to differences in strategic tendencies as described in Chapter 7. The next quote from Ingrid also begins with the mundane reality then moving on to comment on communal workdays.

Ingrid: “I think the weather glues us a lot as well.”

Interviewer: “Common experience?”

Ingrid: “Yeah and that sort of every day drudge of living in community... When it rains every day for 3½ weeks that does actually create a sense of, kind of togetherness... Communal work is another kind of glue for exactly that reason... That sense of camaraderie while you are doing it.”

Interviewer: “So for you the glue, the sort of glue is that common task, doing things together, erm that relationship through task?”

Ingrid: “Yeah relationship through doing, yeah and that for me is definitely far more important than any kind of ideological, overarching yeah glue erm while I think that's important to the project I don't necessarily think it's that important for kind of relationships between people.” **Int 21 18:40**

Towards the end of this quote Ingrid makes an interesting statement in relation to herself, namely that the cohesive bonding effect of community tasks is more important than any particular ideology. That said she adds the proviso that an ideology may in fact be important for the project. In the case of Yosemite it may be possible to think of a practice like Permaculture as providing the basis for an ideological component, even though at present this is usually considered nebulous (Int 18 35:40). Nevertheless in relation

to interactions between community members she considers the common task to be most important.¹²⁷ The cohesive bonding effect of work should then be considered a significant factor in the communal culture within both the urban and rural communities. Differences however between the urban and rural context are recognisable in that within the rural context members are predominantly working directly with organic matter. In the urban context, although also working with organic matter on the allotments and the gardens, the majority of work time is taken up with man-made objects.

I now want to turn my attention to the material reality that is so often at the centre of the rural communal workdays, namely nature or the land. For some rural community members the desire to be on the land, work the land, live off the land and experience nature was what they had in common. In this next quote Oak is responding to my question about why he thinks there is such a good sense of community at Raven Hill.

Oak: “A sense of just wanting to be on the land I think, the major thing is, everyone's ethos' are slightly different, everyone's got different reasons why they want to be here but I think just to live on the land is the, the major one, and to be close to nature and live on the land, and like experience life rather than brick walls and concrete everywhere, really being very close to nature, that's the thing that binds, we're so different in other aspects, so different a lot of us.”

Int 13 14:50

Oak points out here something very simple, that community members value the experiences of living upon the land. It is therefore likely that the everyday experiences and interactions with nature are central.¹²⁸ Such experiences

¹²⁷ Such communal work days and the material realities that they make possible may be understood as significant rituals for the community as a whole. I am thinking here of the Yosemite community who conducted a 'barn raising' event, everyone within the community and other invited guests worked together to complete the erection of the timber barn structure in just one day. In a celebratory mood the day ended with a communal meal shared by all. The event or ritual was still recalled by community member's years after the event (Field notes Yosemite march 2012).

¹²⁸ Halfacree appears to make a very similar observation by categorising traditional farming communities as essentially tribal, bound together by 'distinct practices' and 'ways of life', which inevitably will link to interaction with nature (Halfacree, 1998, p. 206)

are frequently considered significant, beneficial, natural and desirable. Rural community members often verbalise their feelings one to another about their interactions with nature and this is not necessarily linked to an ideological framework (Field notes Raven Hill Autumn 2012). Solidarity is therefore built upon the individual body experiences of community members who in turn verbalise and communicate with others how they feel about these body experiences. Bourdieu's concept of habitus as discussed in Chapter 1.2 can again be usefully applied here. A distinct habitus has developed in this rural context; one which is predominantly orientated to the immediate organic environment. I maintain that this habitus has a major role in community bonding. Below I have defined the term 'organic embodied solidarity' to emphasise the bonding aspects of this specific habitus; one which is significantly influenced by personal experiences and emotions when interacting with nature.¹²⁹ I emphasise again that such a solidarity is not necessarily centred on explicit meaning in the ideological sense; in relation to this realm it may be considered ambiguous or weak.¹³⁰ Some community members consider the intense experience of nature connection beyond comprehension in the ideological sense and therefore they were comfortable to leave it un-verbalised and unlabelled, particularly in the social realm (Int 8 20:20).¹³¹ I am not claiming here that the experience of 'nature-connection' cannot be associated with ideological concepts such as romanticism, transpersonal ecology (Fox, 1990) and Eco-Paganism. However it is important to note that such ideological concepts were not common currency

¹²⁹ I would have preferred the term 'organic solidarity' however it may have been confused with Durkheim's use of the term in his book 'The Division of Labour in Society' (1933), the concepts he draws out has little resonance with what I am defining here. In a similar vein I do not infer any particular distinction in relation to class by employing the term solidarity it is used to infer a basic and affectionate form of social bonding.

¹³⁰ Interestingly two sustainable communities from the Diggers and Dreams website, Ty'r Ethin and Old Chapel farm, have described their ideological focus as 'connecting people to the land'. Even so I would maintain that the statement pertains to an activity and experience not an explicitly framed ideological concept.

¹³¹ Although ambiguous and weak I do not consider ideological meaning to be totally absent, as will become apparent there seems to be an inherent tendency to seek a common language and understanding surrounding these intense experiences of nature.

for everyone within the rural communities. Eco-Paganism in its various forms most certainly correlated to 'nature-connection' and was clearly the dominant ideological understanding of the phenomenon, nevertheless some community members expressed an intense passion for 'nature-connection' without adopting notions pertaining to Eco-paganism. The 'organic embodied solidarity' that I am defining here relates to the connection and bonding effect between community members who it is assumed experience the same intense feelings and passions in nature. This intensity enables any ideological understandings to be put to one side. In short the bonding is centred on the assumption of similar body experiences; similar emotional responses (carnal knowing see 9.4.1 below) and not so much a shared understanding of the phenomenon formulated in the mind.

A number of community members chose to practise solitary, self-constructed rituals as a means of giving physical expression to their experiences of nature (Int 7 23:33). Again such rituals may be conducted in such a way that leaves the ideological meaning ambiguous or weak, the solstice celebrations which I discussed in Chapter 6.3.3 would be one such example of this. Nevertheless a move towards a common language and understanding about the experiences relating to connection with nature could be detected within the rural communities. For instance Permaculture is considered by some members as an ideological focus that bonds the community together.¹³² As I have commented on in Chapter 3.4.3, the permaculture approach outlines clear concepts of how humans should interact healthily with nature to form a holistic culture for both. In this respect it goes some way to an ideological understanding of the experiences brought about through 'nature connection', it offers guiding traditions and principles for interacting with nature. However as pointed out by some community members at present it is considered to be nebulous (Int 18 35:40) lacking many aspects normally associated with a fully formed comprehensive ideology. Its amorphous nature was also evident when I enquired if Permaculture could be considered a spiritual concept, I received mixed responses to this question some stating clearly not (Int 16 1:32:20) and others expressing that it was founded on spiritual principles (Int

¹³² Yosemite along with many other sustainable communities describes its 'ideological focus' on Diggers and Dreams website as 'Permaculture' and nothing more.

1 1:09:15).¹³³ Permaculture then should perhaps be understood as an environmentally focussed practice which is presently ambiguous in relation to providing an ideological component for community bonding. That said, it may be operating as one among many ideological strands that are bonding the community together, that is forming one part of a raft of bonding concepts, these being continually contested (see 9.5 below).

Historically religion has provided ideological concepts to comprehend and make sense of the experiences and phenomena of nature. Some community members clearly expressed that for them the experiences of nature were primarily comprehended as spiritual experiences and this is what I would like to comment on now.

9.3.1 Religion and Spirituality, Bonding and Functional Aspects in the Rural Context

I begin this section by emphasising again the ambiguity surrounding the nature-connection experience, this is demonstrated clearly here by Arnie who was very sceptical about meta-empirical forms of spirituality.

Arnie: “There is this whole thing, probably at [Raven Hill] as well, this whole ‘nature connection’, again I guess it is a form of spirituality, erm where that lies for me I don't know it's only something I have, the more time I spend here the more time I become interested in that.”

Int 16 1:57:30

Arnie appears to be interested in exploring if his experiences of nature may be associated with a spiritual understanding, perhaps more ideologically based. Gazza in this next quote is more explicit and certain that his everyday interactions with nature define his religious practice.

Gazza: “We were brought together with these ecological ideas and that's what it's about and, that's mostly what peoples spiritual feelings are as well, I would say is now that I feel like I am, erm I don't know, yeah I feel almost like my day-to-day living and respecting the things, plants around me and the animals around me, that's my way of, of erm [long pause].”

¹³³ An interesting article in ‘Permaculture Works’ Vol 3 issue 7 Autumn 2011 page 17 entitled ‘Pagan Permaculture’ explores the ambiguity surrounding this issue.

Willow: “Sharing your spirituality?”

Gazza: “Yeah practicing my religion.” **Int 3 59:25**

This form of spiritual practice is clearly similar to Eco-Paganism as I have defined it in Chapter 4.5 and furthermore if other community members felt the same it could play a role in bonding community members together albeit in an unstructured way (core pagan doxa). This form of community bonding can be contrasted with the stronger form that was observed in relation to the Art of Mentoring movement and core shamanism (developing). Where the experiences of nature, for these community members, were understood in relation to specific native peoples and practices, including their spiritual beliefs concerning the ancestors. I have already described in Chapter 8.5 how this form of bonding is problematic and challenging to the dominant pluralistic ethic and Eco-Paganism.

I asked community members at Raven Hill and Yosemite directly if religion or spirituality was playing a role within their community life, and if so could they describe it? This quote from Karen was similar to many other community members who emphasised a vague sense of bonding that remained unlabelled in the social realm.

Karen: “I think it plays a role [interruption¹³⁴] it bonds people's identities and yeah I think in the connection to the land I think, that's quite spiritual for people even if they don't necessarily put a name to it as a spiritual kind of thing.” **Int 13 16:48**

Here again the connection to the land is emphasised and the vague notion of spirituality is present, whether acknowledged by community members or not. Karen's understanding of community bonding in relation to nature is inclusive; she takes the trouble to accommodate community members who may not express a language of spirituality, for instance non-religious members, thereby maintaining an inclusive pluralist ethic. This next quote from Willow emphasises that the community at Raven Hill does not have a common spiritual framework.

Willow: “I think it's probably playing a bigger role than we realise, because we don't, because we haven't got a set religion or set spiritual base, we don't really realise how spiritual individuals are and how perhaps their lives are run in a kind of spiritual way maybe, so I

¹³⁴ Interjection from partner “not so much, well I don't think”

think possibly more than we realise, but we don't have a spiritual glue in the sense of a spiritual framework, so perhaps not as much as it could, but perhaps more than we realise.” **Int 2 57:37**

Here Willow points out that the Raven Hill community does not have an explicit set spiritual framework, one that would highlight their common spiritual beliefs. Consequently she has to estimate the overlap and commonality in other members’ spiritual traditions, this she estimates is greater than most people may think. She also seems to intimate that spirituality could play a bigger role in communal life if they had a set spiritual framework. Her quote highlights a dynamic tension between pluralist diversity and a more unified structured spiritual tradition that may well increase the bonding of community members one to another. Presently at both Raven Hill and Yosemite the pluralistic ethic remains dominant. This ensures that in these rural contexts spiritual traditions have a secure, but not dominant, place. Consequently such traditions do have a role along with other ideologies and practices in bonding members together. This was perhaps most starkly revealed by Arnie in this next quote who professes no particular spiritual tradition and who was occasionally openly critical of spiritual beliefs.

Arnie: “It has a role [pause] and [pause] let me think [long pause] I don't think Yosemite would have achieved quite as much as it, or what it is is, I think it would have been more, if it didn't have that element of spirituality it would be more, kind of money based I suppose, so yeah I guess, spirituality, freedom of choice, it's your freedom to be or take whatever you and yeah its role as part of the freedom, it's its yeah, it's personally not my thing, you know I yeah have my criticisms I have my fears over it, but I am glad it's here.”

Int 16 1:55:21

This eclectic approach to ideologies, although not consciously acknowledged or verbalised, appeared to prevail at both rural communities. This dominant ethic would explain the strong resistance from some community members about being specifically identified and labelled as a ‘Spiritual Community’; to do so would imply a ‘certain conformity of thought’ (Int 19 14:33). Nevertheless, there seems to be a number of community members wanting to explore the more unified communal form of spirituality (Chapter 8.2). At Yosemite ex-member Jay stated that one of his reasons for leaving was to concentrate on a more unified structured religious tradition, Mahayana Buddhism, and in particular interaction with other people of the

same religious tradition. I asked if the practice of Mahayana Buddhism within the community was problematic? Jay said it was not an issue.....

Jay: "Because it was always everyone's personal thing, because some people weren't particularly focused on the spiritual side of it, you know no objection to it but not wanting it to be a group [uncompleted sentence], if someone had proposed erm, the group needs to have an ethos of Earth spirituality or something there would have been people who would have said no I'm not comfortable with that." **Int 22 24:33**

I will comment further on the tendency of some community members to seek a more unified spiritual practice towards the end of this Chapter.

In summary what can be said about community bonding in a rural context? Firstly it is clear that community bonding is complex, dependent upon an eclectic mix or raft of ideologies, both political and environmental. Political concepts such as anarchism were expressed albeit in a weaker form when compared to the urban context. Permaculture was also understood to offer some ideological focus however the individual interpretation by the community members was found to be diverse and ambiguous, indicating no clear cohesion. Not surprisingly ideologies associated with religious concepts were found to be significant though these were again diverse and ambiguous within the social realm. The divisive effect of this phenomenon was mitigated by identification with a core pagan doxa (see Chapter 5.4). In terms of religion and spirituality it is my estimation that this core pagan doxa was what was being referred to when community members indicated that spirituality played an implicit role within the community life. There seemed to be wariness from some community members about homogenising their diverse Eco-Pagan practices into a set spiritual framework, suggesting that a pluralistic ethic remains dominant. Although as seen in Chapter 8 some community members want to explore this set and structured religious form of community cohesion.

Also bound up with the eclectic mix of ideologies was the practical aspects of community life, the binding effect of daily life lived together. This bonding was formed through a distinct way of life. Members were pushed together by experiencing the challenges of their environment, these being integral to low-impact way of life and also drawn together by their ecstatic experiences of nature connection. The land and nature were clearly identified as bonding

community members together; in this sense the land, nature and trees for example, were perceived as members of the community (Int 5 49:00).¹³⁵ If any significant changes were to be made to the land then the land needed to be listened to and respected. The social aspects of community life also made a vital contribution towards community cohesion, the many social interactions that happened every day. Such interactions were found to be both bonding and damaging to community cohesion. In this respect the consensus decision-making process (and the way of council at Yosemite) was also referred to by community members as an important commitment to one another. There was a distinct commitment to remain in process and relationship with one another.

In a similar way to the urban context it was clear that although having a pluralistic ethic in relation to ideology, a dominant culture prevailed. This cultural homogeneity was formed by everyday life activities and normative practices as I have described in Chapter 5 i.e. Work days, dress, party celebrations, food, child rearing and use of drugs etc... Yet it is also necessary to note that in Chapter 7 I outlined a divide in relation to strategic tendencies (spiky-fluffy), as existing in the rural context. Whilst predominantly overlapping the spiky fluffy tendencies did display recognisable cultural differences, especially in relation to work practices. Hence the community discourse which I felt necessary to comment upon.

Finally I want to highlight the interplay of all these individual elements which contribute to community bonding. The typical work day in the rural context will suffice as an example. During the workday community members will assemble for a particular task on the land, such as coppicing, they will agree among themselves different roles relating to the task to be done. They will then begin working on the land or the forest usually in the same geographical area, they will be interacting directly with nature, experiencing the flora and fauna. It is not unheard of for the group to break from the work task and discuss particular phenomenon within nature such as the unusual behaviour of a pair of ravens. Community members will frequently sing aloud expressing their appreciation of nature from a particular spiritual tradition. At lunchtime community members often amalgamate what food they have

¹³⁵ The relational concept of the land emphasised here could also be detected at Brithdir Mawr where land and nature were considered as a 'partner' (Maxey, 2002, p. 217).

sharing it together. Within this single example can be seen the combining of many elements that I have drawn out thus far:- common task, nature connection, eating together, interacting with nature, social interaction, consensus process in allocating tasks. The combining and overlapping of these bonding elements appeared important to members, more than the sum of its parts, building to an intense experience of community.

9.4 Locating the Research Findings within Sociological Theory

Having analysed community bonding in the urban and rural context, an inherently functional concern, I will now relate my findings to two main bodies of sociological work, New Social Movement theories and sociological theories applied to the 1960s communes movement. I will be returning to Chapter 2 and reflecting on the possibility that a New Social Movement with a heterogeneous ideological make-up and biased towards cultural and relational concerns can spawn a commune or small-scale community that is similarly heterogeneous and orientated towards cultural and relational concerns. This may on the surface appear logical however I will outline the resulting tensions when movement participants attempt this process. I will begin by analysing the 1960s communes movement within the USA which is generally considered by theorists to have spawned by the very first expressions of an emerging new type of social movement (NSM), namely the countercultural and civil rights movements in the USA. I will concentrate in particular on the academic discourse surrounding the role of ideological frameworks within the newly formed small communities. I will then analyse a similar but much reduced in scale phenomenon within the UK. Having presented analysis to support my proposition, that an ideologically diverse new social movement has resulted in a number of ideologically diverse communities, I will go on to consider the consequences of such a development. Finally after reflecting on these two bodies of sociological work I will suggest that past developments within the commune movements (USA and UK) correlates well with the changes identified at:- Brecon, from an ideological focus to one centred on cultural, relational and normative principles in the present - and at Raven Hill and Yosemite, the journey towards an organised form of religion as outlined in Chapter 8. However I will begin by locating my observations surrounding a form of 'organic

embodied solidarity' as discussed above within wider social theories relating to embodiment.

9.4.1 Organic Embodied Solidarity

The body has in recent years become the site of increasing academic interest within sociology (Belzen, 1999; Burkitt, 1999; Harris, 2008; Hughes, 1998; Langan, 2007; Rountree, 2006; Schlottmann, 2002; Shilling, 2007; Turner, 2010; Yusef, 2008). Two academic collaborations appear to be particularly relevant to my findings, Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, who focus on embodiment and nature (1998, 2000) and Philip Mellor and Chris Shilling who focus on the body and religion (1997, 2010a). Firstly Macnaghten and Urry have asserted that nature is essentially 'socially and culturally constructed' and consequently 'there are many 'natures' and not just one' (1998, p. 30). They then go on to suggest that personal body sensations in this construction process have in the past not been adequately recognised.

“It is our general claim in this Chapter that much writing about the 'environment' has not been sufficiently embodied, that it has not addressed the complex, diverse, overlapping and contradictory ways in which people sense the world around them and come to judgements of feeling, emotion and beauty about what is appropriately 'natural' and 'unnatural' about their environment(s). It has also not taken full cognisance of the hierarchies of senses which produce different 'structures of feeling' about different spaces.”(1998, p. 104).

Past analysis of environmental groups may well have downplayed the sensory aspects of communal life favouring their cognitive understandings (Pepper & Hallam, 1991), hence the specific highlighting above of an organic embodied solidarity in connection with nature (Chapter 9.3) is apt in that it provides a more comprehensive assessment. Towards the end of the quote above Macnaghten and Urry point to a type of hierarchy of the senses as prevalent within contemporary society, one that privileges sight (Also see Mellor & Shilling, 1997, p. 186). In contrast to this, the organic embodied solidarity that I am describing here, is certainly not biased to the same degree, if anything it draws upon smell, taste, touch and sound in greater proportions than sight. Adrian Harris, whilst recognising the importance of the embodied experience, has gone further in recognising that such significant embodied experiences also relate to place. His development of a model of 'embodied situated cognition' (2011) draws significantly upon the

field of cognitive psychology. In relation to organic embodied solidarity it was noted above that community members attributed great value and meaning to connection with the land. Consequently I will assume that place, which offers a common experience of nature and a specific terrain to build a common muscular consciousness (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998, p. 169), plays a significant role in organic embodied solidarity. I would also concur with Harris that place is particularly relevant to the differences between urban and rural contexts where differing degrees of organic environment may be experienced (2008, p. 105).

Mellor and Shilling have explored embodiment in relation to religion and their discoveries offer a helpful theoretical framework in which to consider organic embodied solidarity. Their most relevant work in this context appears to be 'Re-forming the body: religion, community and modernity' (1997). Firstly drawing upon Durkheim's analysis they differentiate between 'forms of embodiment, forms of sociality and forms of knowing' (1997, p. 2). Forms of embodiment they define as 'those underlying structures which provide the parameters for particular societies'. Such forms are closely attached to the human senses and 'underpin thought, belief and human interaction' (1997, pp. 4-5). Forms of sociality are defined as patterns of human interaction, these human interactions far from being independent are closely associated with types of bodily habitus. Hence forms of sociality and forms of embodiment need to be considered together (1997, p. 13). Forms of knowing are defined as meaning constructs or mental phenomena. Two particular forms of knowing are outlined 'carnal knowing' and 'cognitive apprehension': this distinction is drawn 'to indicate the relative importance of knowledge gained through the body' (1997, p. 23). It is claimed forms of knowing that an emphasise 'cognitive apprehension' can result in a 'losing touch' with the embodied basis of knowledge (1997, p. 22). The three forms, and two sub variants provide a framework for Mellor and Shilling to analyse earlier historical periods in which bodies have been formed or reformed.

These distinctions are helpful in understanding a particular aspect of organic embodied solidarity. Some community members appeared reluctant to express cognitive or theoretical understandings in relation to nature connection and their experiences when working the land. Other community members however went on to adopt more cognitive theories frequently related to religion and spirituality. The Art of Mentoring movement described earlier would be a good example of this tendency. Organic embodied solidarity then was truly unifying in relation to forms of embodiment (common

body experiences) and the forms of sociality (common social interaction around such body experiences) which developed, however in relation to forms of knowing differences existed (see Chapter 5.4) and these I maintain relate to the community discourse in Chapter 8. It is likely that a number of community members, seemingly reluctant to espouse explicit forms of knowing (cognitive apprehension unrelated to the body experience), did in fact adopt understandings: ones biased towards the experiences of the body (carnal knowing) and formulated with less reference to previous cognitively constructed meanings (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998, p. 11). It is important to consider here the body experiences of those urban community members and EDA movement participants who encountered nature in an intensive way for the first time. Their new experiences of nature may have been difficult to comprehend given that they had less previous experience of this environment. This newness and freshness no doubt contributed to the vernacular manner in which notions of religion and politics were adapted during the formation of Eco-Paganism.

Also the two forms of knowing (carnal knowing & cognitive apprehension) may relate to the different forms of contemporary paganism I commented upon in Chapter 4.4. In this respect the more animist form of paganism, founded primarily on direct contact with nature and the emotions engendered by such contact, could be said to be closely related to carnal forms of knowing whereas esoteric paganism, which is more focussed on constructed and symbolic notions of nature, could be deemed closer to cognitive apprehension.

Using this distinction then, organic embodied solidarity could be said to be closer to carnal forms of knowing in that the phenomenon is essentially founded on body experiences and social interaction related to those body experiences. Cognitive comprehension of those experiences are generally kept to a minimum.

Later in their book Mellor and Shilling differentiate between 'Banal associations' and 'Sensual solidarities', patterns of behaviour evident in contemporary society. Could organic embodied solidarity then relate to 'sensual solidarities'?

"Banal associations are developments of the Protestant modern body in the sense that they continue to be structured by rationality and cognitive apprehension, but have become dislocated from the sacred referent (the 'sublime') of Protestantism. Consequently, reciprocity and contracts replace standards of ultimate truth and morality, and

there is nothing which cannot be subjected to critical scrutiny, nothing which cannot be explored or reconstructed, and nothing which remains 'out of bounds' because of its other-worldly status. Sensual solidarities, on the other hand, mark the resurgence of the 'shadow kingdom' of effervescence, and of the sacred as a sensually experienced phenomenon. This means that the experience of transcendence again becomes immanent within bodies, sociality and nature. Thus, contemporary Western societies are characterised by a pluralism to some extent (and only to *some* extent) analogous to that of the medieval era." (1997, p. 17).

There are many aspects of organic embodied solidarity that resemble 'sensual solidarities' as described above. For example the sensual experience of nature connection and the emotions that are evoked, commonly bond community member's together (1997, p. 181). However distinct differences are also apparent in that environmental communities on the whole are stable on-going small-scale communities. Community members especially within the rural context tend to have minimal engagement with institutional structures or contractual arrangements preferring instead to engage in *gemeinschaft* forms of social interaction within the group. In this respect their interactions are unlike sensual solidarities which often form only part of a person's total social interaction and where although united within these forms they 'frequently remain divided outside their parameters' (1997, p. 174). Perhaps related to the partial aspects of 'sensual solidarities' is their tendency to be temporary, or founded upon 'fleeting' encounters' (1997, p. 175) In this respect they link with Maffesoli's concept of 'affectual tribes' in that they also are short lived (1996, p. 6; Mellor & Shilling, 1997, p. 175). I have described above in Chapter 6.3.3 what I would consider a classic example of this temporary tribal phenomenon (Wilma's Pagan crew) which also appears to relate to sensual solidarities. Organic embodied solidarity, as exhibited within environmental communities, is neither temporary nor achieved via fleeting encounters, it is in contrast founded on body experiences and social interaction gained over many months and years. Organic embodied solidarity may well have been achieved within the longer lasting road protest camps of the 1990s and be similar to the phenomenon that Harris has associated with the wilderness effect (2008, p. 199). Organic embodied solidarity then is partly formed by sensual solidarities but also has inherent features that correlate closely with *gemeinschaft* social interactions and long-term social interactions.

Are there any similarities between Bourdieu's concept of habitus as discussed in Chapter 1.2 and organic embodied solidarity? Organic embodied solidarity can indeed be associated to the notion of habitus. The everyday actions and social interactions of community members in rural contexts build over time to form a distinct habitus related to the organic environment. The habitus that is formed within the community unites the members: this latent, functional aspect - specifically related to the immediate organic environment - I term organic embodied solidarity. It is important to note however that the communal habitus is not an entirely new creation, it should in fact be considered a reformed habitus. Here I stress the alterity of low impact environmental communities and the very different habitus formed by members in their 'earliest experiences' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 60). As I have noted above, for many this was an urban orientated habitus (see Chapter 4.5). It is possible therefore to contrast this reformed type of habitus with the habitus of agricultural labourers, similar as those studied by Bourdieu, who will have retained a very stable single habitus related to the organic environment.

Collective Identity, as discussed in chapter 2.2.1, also relates to my categorisation. Organic embodied solidarity can be considered a type of collective identity, however it is weighted towards the cultural and embodied aspects formed at the group level. The place of field within this type of collective identity is particularly important. The organic environment is not simply a context to exist within, it is related to in a distinct way. It has a special place in the cognitive (carnal knowing) aspects that are developed within the collective identity. The valorising of nature, and experiences of nature connection, intensifies further the cohesive effects of organic embodied solidarity. I have identified above how some community members extend the cognitive elements of this interaction, adopting or forming religious and spiritual traditions. Organic embodied solidarity is a particularly constructed form of social bonding in that members have chosen to place themselves in rural organic environments: they have chosen not to rely upon machinery and technology which they deem damaging to the environment: they have chosen to subject their bodies to the elements of nature: they have chosen to collaborate and co-operate with other community members and the land within such a context. This can be contrasted with longer standing alternative communities where members are born into stable social structures and habitus (Hall, 1978) .

The significant differences that I have described above led me to conclude that a new categorisation was appropriate. I will now turn to my other observation relating to ideology within the three communities.

9.4.2 Movement Features within the 1960s Communes (USA)

In the utopian and communal ventures before the 1960s there is a general acceptance amongst historians concerning the significant role that religious and political ideologies played. Such ideological frameworks would generally be strongly defined and considered to play a central part in the formation and continuance of the community venture (Coates, 2001; Hardy, 1979).¹³⁶ However in the 1960s communes movement in the USA it was noticed that many communes were eclectic in their use of ideological concepts (Oved, 2013, p. 241), in the notions determining the ethos and values for their commune. Furthermore they were, in many instances, less concerned generally about ideological concepts per se. I will deal with these two features in turn.

9.4.2.1 Ideological Diversity

Firstly their heterogeneous quality (both political and religious), was recognised at the movement level (that is taking the proliferation of communes as a new social movement in itself) (Berger, 1981, p. 196; Melville, 1972, p. 224) and also at the local level within each commune (Hall, 1978, p. 85; Jerome, 1975, p. 10; Speck, 1972, p. 42; Zablocki, 1971, p. 320). Zicklin here in this quote contrasts this phenomena with the 18th and 19th-century communal ventures.

“The type of commitment that prevailed in the long-lasting communities of the 18th and 19th century is not typical of what we find in contemporary communes.... Countercultural communards were reluctant to set up self-perpetuating organisations with hierarchies of authority acting on behalf and in the name of the group. In most instances, decisions regarding communal life were expected

¹³⁶ Communities bonded by strong ideological frameworks in this period were often orientated towards a single, central theme, either political or religious. However some communities resist typologies such as Hardy's (1979) by combining these major historical political themes and religious traditions, for example the Tolstoyan communal ventures which blended anarchism and primitive Christianity. Nevertheless it can still be noted that the ideological framework was central in their concerns and firmly set.

to be reached by consensus with maximum freedom for individuals to act as they saw fit, in the hopes that if and when crucial differences did arise, they would be reconciled through discussion and clarification of the issues, the give and take of compromise, and by appeal to the mutually held values and goals.” (Zicklin, 1983, p. 68 & 69).

As I have outlined in Chapter 2 the countercultural movements of the 1960s were considered by new social movement theorists to be among the first to exhibit these novel characteristics hitherto unseen in the history of social movements. Similarly I have highlighted above in Chapter 3 the novel characteristics of the 1960s communes movement that cannot be identified within the utopian communal ventures before this period (Hardy, 1979; Zablocki, 1980). I maintain that these observations, stemming from different sections of sociological study are connected, namely the arrival of a new type social movement give rise to a new type of communal venture, one that was ideologically heterogeneous (Laraña et al., 1994, p. 7; Scott, 1990, p. 15 & 100).

At this juncture it is worth reflecting upon the structural differences between the new social movements and the commune or smaller community in the USA. It was by no means a foregone conclusion that the features relating to the wider new social movement would transfer in equal proportion to the commune (Zicklin, 1983, p. 87). The proliferation of the number of categories employed by sociologists to type communes indicates that to some extent many communes assimilated around one particular strand of ideology within the wider movement (Zablocki, 1980, p. 205). These communes were from the very beginning considerably less ideologically diverse than the movement. Other communes however began with a greater ideological diversity and quickly restructured or re-formed so that a degree of ideological unity could be assumed (Zicklin, 1983, p. 54). The division that was most prominent in the restructuring related to the two strategic philosophies ‘Hippies and the New left’ which I have commented upon in Chapter 7 (Melville, 1972, p. 78). Nonetheless a sizeable section of communes exhibited a range of ideologies similar to the movement as a whole. These communes in many respects cannot be considered intentional communities in that most of their members joined a new social movement with specific goals and it was only as that social movement dissipated that they transferred to the communes movement adopting roughly the same goals and objectives (Melville, 1972, p. 80 & 82). Interestingly many of those

interviewed at Brecon, Raven Hill and Yosemite expressed a similar journey into their respective communities, they were not particularly interested in experiencing communal living with other movement participants (Int 33 24:10), they joined to further the movement aims.

For those communes who did attempt, either consciously or unconsciously, to found communes that were essentially expressions of the wider movement, the structural differences between social movement and the commune became apparent (see discussions in Chapter 2.2.1 on the different levels of collective identity, movement and group). I will concentrate on two particular tensions.

Firstly the scope for choice and mobility within the social movement is far greater than the commune setting. If a movement participant was discontent with a particular ideological concept, normative principle or personal relationship they were able to reposition themselves elsewhere within the same social movement, this being particularly true for new social movements with their inherent diversity. Within the commune however there was much less scope for this repositioning.¹³⁷ When such limitations are combined with the day-to-day realities within the commune, members may well ask what they have in common with their fellow communards. The amorphous, eclectic approach towards ideological frameworks dominant within new social movements will become more apparent.

Secondly, the communal pattern of living tends to generate desire for longevity within the commune members. This essentially utopian impulse and search for security is a much contested area for sociologists studying communes. The lengthy lifespan of some 19th-century communes can be contrast with the relatively brief trajectories of many social movements. Although the effect of past social movements influences the present, they quickly lose their ability to attract large sections of movement participants. There is no particular expectation from the beginning that the social movement participant will continue to be committed indefinitely. Their very function from the beginning is to achieve socially related goals and objectives, these goals and objectives, that initially united participants, will if

¹³⁷ It is possible that some commune members transferred to other communes inspired by the same social movement and indeed there is some evidence that this took place (Berger, 1981, pp. 30-35), in any case they were likely to have been confronted with a similar dynamic.

they are successful, no longer exist. (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995, p. 186).¹³⁸ It is in this respect that communes have tended to search for or construct ideological frameworks that ensure a stable well understood ideological platform for the future (Laraña et al., 1994, p. 80; Oved, 2013, p. 258).

9.4.2.2 Social and Cultural Emphasis

I now want to elaborate on the second dominant feature evident within new social movements which has also been recognised within the communes movements, namely the shift away from an ideological focus to the cultural, relational and normative principles in the present (Melucci et al., 1989, p. 71; Scott, 1990, pp. 16,31; Veysey, 1978, p. 203; Zicklin, 1983, p. 48). As Judson Jerome describes here the two features I have chosen to highlight are not entirely unrelated.

“Heathcote is exceptionally pluralistic, such communes as these may be quite fluid in structure and may encompass a broad range of purposes and contain (at least for periods) individuals who do not particularly identify with their external purposes, though the commune as a whole regards living together as a means towards some defined aims. An internally orientated, pluralistic, non-creedal commune is likely to regard communal living as an end in itself. Its purpose is to facilitate the multiple purposes of its members, and its vector of growth and change is a composite made up of these.” (Jerome, 1975, p. 10).

The lack of a single ideological framework or creed therefore necessitates a very different communal expression. Again it is worth considering the difference between the social movement and the commune pattern of living. In many respects the communes movement itself was a movement predominantly caused by the countercultural movement’s preoccupation with culture and lifestyle. Nevertheless significant differences, mainly relating to domestic arrangements, were evident. Within the wider context, movement participants, after interacting with the movement generally, retreated to work

¹³⁸ The contingent and temporary nature of social movements can also be related to the concept developed by Maffesoli of ‘affectual tribes’. In this respect ‘affectual tribes’ may in fact resemble affinity-groups more associated with social movements than with traditional, stable groupings such as communes (Maffesoli, 1996).

and domestic arrangements within the influence of mainstream society or within the personal control of the participant. The communard's life however was subject to much greater communal influence, the 'Individual vs Communal' tension as described in Chapter 3. The qualitative dissimilarities can be emphasised by considering the differences between a weekend 'encounter group' for movement participants who at the end of it will return to personally organised domestic arrangements and communards who will continue to share domestic and work arrangements day in day out, the differences are manifestly immense (Zicklin, 1983, p. 85). The potential for extended social enjoyment with other members is possible within the commune setting; equally however disagreements and negative emotions are felt in greater proportion. In summary when it's good it's really really good and when it's bad, it's really really bad! Communal problems can be magnified 'out of all proportions becoming a larger burden and strain than it might otherwise be' (Shenker, 1986, p. 249).

It is at this juncture the ideological framework becomes relevant. Past utopian and communal ventures have employed ideological concepts to determine the cultural and normative practices (Zablocki, 1980, p. 189). Historically communards have appealed to ideological concepts to resolve disputes.¹³⁹ Within ideologically heterogeneous communes though appeals were made to multiple ideological concepts which consequently diminish the unifying influence of the same. Communitarians therefore cannot predict with any certainty their fellow communards' cultural and normative preferences (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 128), they will be negotiated situation to situation. Such a dynamic is not helpful for medium and long-term planning within the commune. The 'Individual Vs. Group' tension as discussed in Chapter 3 takes on another dimension in these instances as the group may pull in any number of directions depending on the views of the other members, it may then become unwieldy or unpredictable. Even so a counteracting effect to this may be identified within the group habitus, see discussions in Chapter 1.2. Any given ingrained habitus is actually robust

¹³⁹ In emphasising the set nature of the ideological frameworks employed by past communal ventures I do not want to imply that such ideological frameworks were completely static, indeed the very process of agreeing normative principles can alter any given communities ideological framework. This dynamic has been particularly emphasised by Barry Shenker (1986).

and not conducive to rapid change (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 60-61; Mellor & Shilling, 1997, p. 21).

Another important aspect to take into account is that periods of positive communal life, which are emotionally rewarding, are not necessarily associated to a particular ideological concept.¹⁴⁰ In other words they are not captured and cognitively evaluated in relation to a single ideological framework, they are instead enjoyed in the moment. However as I have noted above there will be a sense of anxiety surrounding the fact that such 'emotional solidarity' may well be temporal and cannot be secured for the future (McKay, 1998, pp. 13-14; Zicklin, 1983, p. 72).

In agreement with the sociologists referred to above, I maintain that similar tensions have exerted a force on community members at Brecon, Raven Hill and Yosemite. In the rural context this may explain the movement towards a single coherent ideological framework (Chapter 8). In the language of Abrams and McCulloch we could refer to the 'forcing houses of identity' (1976, p. 117) likewise Gilbert Zicklin refers to the 'Centripetal forces of ideological and personal conflict' (1983, p. 77) and furthermore Barry Shenker talks of the necessity for an 'official ideology' one which will explain the very existence for the commune, the assumption being that the commune is in its very essence an 'ideological creation' (Shenker, 1986, p. 7). These 'homogenising forces' as I will term them, build over time producing a tendency to unite in both ideology and culture. There are of course other influences within the cultural domain that are stabilising, within the environmental communities studied I observed the employment of repetitive 'green scripts' (Horton, 2003, p. 68) which become predictable and stable routines, almost traditions in themselves (Cambell in P. E. Heelas, Lash, & Morris, 1996, p. 166). But since I am here attempting to highlight the tensions in relation to ideology, I will underscore that individual members in both urban and rural contexts were concerned about the long-term future of their community (Int 33 126:10 Int 18 1:19:20).

¹⁴⁰ At Brecon some community members expressed the positive emotional life of the community as something that they particularly appreciated however instead of associating this with a particular ideological framework or even normative principles adhered to by the group it was put down to being 'lucky' (Int 33 125:11).

I have explained the significant differences between social movements and their resulting communal expressions, in particular the differences and factors that have forced or pushed communards towards adopting firm and strong ideological frameworks.¹⁴¹ Before going on to analyse how communes have historically responded to these forces I would like to identify the same tensions as existing within the 1970s communes movement in the UK and within David Pepper's study of green communities in the 1990s.

9.4.3 Movement Features within the 1970s Communes & 1990s Green Communes (UK)

The 1960s' countercultural social movements within the UK were significantly smaller in relation to the numbers of participants. Treating these movements either side of the Atlantic as separate entities may in many respects be invalidated by the significant influence, one upon another, via literature, magazines, TV, music and increased mobility due to the development of aviation (Roszak, 1969). The influence of these movements around the world then heralded a novel concept, namely a global social movement (Mills, 1973, p. 2). The communes movement likewise was significantly smaller than the movement in the USA and arrived slightly later between 1970 – 1972 (Coates, 2013, p. 289). Sociological studies of the UK communes were far fewer than the USA (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976; Mills, 1973; Rigby, 1974a) nevertheless within these studies both the features I have identified above can be detected. Firstly it is commonly acknowledged that they were ideologically heterogeneous both at the movement level and within each individual commune.

“Moreover the solidarity of the group is rarely a matter of cherishing a single value or purpose indefinitely but rather of creating a setting in which multiple values can be at least partially and fleetingly realised... This is plainly true of communes. Not only are they not sustained by single principles of solidarity, they are successful or unsuccessful in

¹⁴¹ This firm ideological framework may in fact be a combination of the heterogeneous influences evident within the social movement. Kanter has identified something similar to this within Synanon, a religious community which organises drug rehabilitation. This community does indeed draw upon an eclectic mix of ideologies both political and religious. Importantly however it can be noted that this ideological fusion is fixed, set, in essence creedal and therefore truly a firm ideological framework (Kanter, 1972, p. 210).

relation to many different criteria which may often seem to oppose one another and which are differently valued by different members of the group.” (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 155).

This frequently had the effect of communards refusing to solely identify with, or be labelled with, any particular political ideology. Furthermore Rigby records that some communards refused to ‘type themselves in any way’ (Rigby, 1974a, p. 230). Secondly the shift away from associating with a set ideological framework and centring more on personal, relational and cultural factors was also observed (Mills, 1973, p. 38). Rigby here comments on the communards’ attitudes towards political demonstrations.

“For the majority of communitarians of all types, however, demonstrating, like voting was seen as an irrelevant, fruitless and ineffectual pastime... For them the important sphere of radical action takes place within one's own head and in one's relationships with others. This was a recurring theme throughout the commune movement in general.” (Rigby, 1974a, p. 248).

It is also worth remarking here that Rigby predominantly refers to *identity* when discussing the ideological differences and employs the term ideology sparingly, this in itself seems significant (Rigby, 1974a, p. 339).

As I have elaborated upon in Chapter 3 many of these 1970s communes steadily became ‘devolved utopias’ eventually re-orientating themselves toward environmental concerns.¹⁴² In David Pepper's analysis of Green Communities the same two features that I have chosen to focus on can be detected. Pepper appears to have struggled, along with other academics (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, pp. 9-11), to *type* the communards to particular political ideologies. He eventually concluded that a ‘green/anarchist/socialist continuum described most people's disposition’ pertaining to politics. To construct a definitive table with the percentages of all the respondents he had to effectively ‘judge people's overall ideologies’. This he did by evaluating other parts of their interview (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 100). In adopting this approach I feel that Pepper failed to accept an important paradigm shift, namely the eclectic approach to political and environmental

¹⁴² Zablocki defines ‘devolved utopias’ as ‘communes in which the founding was based on some other clear ideological purpose but in which, for a variety of reasons, this larger purpose had faded into the background or evaporated entirely’ (Zablocki, 1980, p. 223).

ideologies¹⁴³, also identified within new social movements (Scott, 1990, p. 15 & 100).

In relation to the shift from ideology to cultural and relational concerns Pepper employs the terms apolitical and pragmatism.

“Other green pragmatists declared themselves mixtures of every political philosophy, or that they were ‘anti-ideology: things always turn out differently from what you think so if you start off determined to stick to a particular ideology you come unstuck’.... ‘I feel things rather than define and think’, said one woman when asked about her deepest convictions. ‘I don’t have ideologies’, said another, we should try to love one another and live humbly on the Earth in relation to the rest of nature.” (Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 107).

I have presented above observations from two bodies of sociological research which I maintain can be linked. I have posited that a new type social movement in the USA & UK resulted in a new type of communal venture, one that was ideologically heterogeneous and culturally, relationally orientated. I propose that a similar process has taken place in relation to the 1990s road protests (McKay, 1998, pp. 30 42-43) and the environmental communities that I have studied. A heterogeneous mix of political and environmental ideologies could indeed be identified at Brecon, this appearing very similar to Peppers analysis of green communities (1991, p. 101). The movement of energy and focus towards cultural, relational and normative principles could also be identified, this developing at the expense of the wider social movement aims at the national level. In the rural context the heterogeneous ideologies spanned both politics and religion. Political ideology was observed as much weaker in general but nonetheless diverse where present. The movement of energy and focus to the cultural, relational and normative behaviour could also be verified. However in contrast to the urban context this was often conflated with the concept and experience of ‘nature connection’. All this assisted in forming what I have termed a feeling of ‘organic embodied solidarity’. These two dominant features then (ideological heterogeneity and cultural emphasis) in both rural and urban contexts play a foundational role in defining the implicit pluralistic ethic. This

¹⁴³ The eclectic mix of political ideologies can also be noted in the writings of Boris Frankel who outlines an eclectic mix of political notions in relation to socialism and utopian thought (1987, p. 263).

pluralistic ethic, as outlined in Chapter 8, has been challenged by the attempts of some community members to adopt a more structured form of spirituality. I will now address this development exhibited within the rural context.

9.5 Movement Towards 'Religion' or 'Secular Dissent'.

I have discussed above the forces that are assumed by sociologists to affect communes that are ideologically heterogeneous; forces that tend over time to homogenise both ideology and culture. Communes in the past have resolved the tensions caused by these homogenising forces in one of three ways, abandon the commune, move to a religious structure or construct an arena for 'secular dissent'. I will discuss the latter two options as I consider they relate to the environmental communities that I have studied.

Throughout the literature pertaining to communes there are many references to non-religious communes that contained diverse political ideologies reforming round a strong religious ideological framework. Just to be clear, I am not describing here the process of a 'devolved utopian' community being taken over by another group, a religiously devout group, which is of course possible. I am referring to a collective or partly collective decision to adopt a more structured religious framework. This phenomenon was recorded as occurring within both the 1960s communes movement in the USA (Berger, 1981, p. 91; Jerome, 1975, p. 10; Roberts, 1971, p. 50; Zablocki, 1971, p. 320) and within the 1970s UK communes movement (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 132; Castro, 1996). Also earlier in this Chapter I have documented the particular concern by some community members concerning the adoption of Christian beliefs by part of a community connected to the movement. In a similar vein I could refer to many records of 'individuals' leaving ideologically heterogeneous communities to join other specifically religious communities (Berger, 1981, pp. 30-36). What then are the benefits of such a move? Kanter identifies the significance of transcendence within religious belief, in particular the necessity for shared belief and goals to make this transcendence possible.

"Agreement, shared belief, and common purpose are indispensable to the creation of transcendence. A mechanism aiding transcendence, then, would be the requirement that all members undergo a conversion to the movement's ideology." (Kanter, 1972, p. 122).

Benjamin Zablocki however points to the interpretive framework that religion brings, this offering an explanation for the ecstatic, positive experiences within the community.

“Those communes that have survived the conflict between freedom and family have become increasingly aware of the need for an interpretive framework, both to explain collective experiences and to give the commune a vocabulary and a common set of values. Much spiritual search, often eclectic, is associated with the movement. Some communes have taken up a Christian mythos, although it seems extremely doubtful that this will ever become widespread in America.” (Zablocki, 1971, p. 320).

Abrahams and McCulloch stress the functional role religion can play, underlining the tensions wrought in balancing the needs of the individual with the group, they maintained this puts a strain upon the community which is commonly resolved by reforming the communes' structure, often to a religious one.

“In the most usual case, the strain of sustaining the delicate balance of self-interest and mutual attentiveness that is required for the successful survival of a commune is overwhelming. Accordingly, most communes move either toward the lesser success of disintegration or towards persistence on the basis of a re-establishment of 'Society'. The most common form of the latter involves remaking the commune or making a new commune under the auspices of a religion.” (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976, p. 161 & 162).

The tendency that is being outlined here is of course open to challenge by conflicting examples that seemingly move in the opposite direction, that is from religious community to a non-religious based community (Jerome, 1975, p. 10; Sargisson & Sargent, 2004, p. 103). However it appears that these examples are in effect 'devolved utopias' which have come about by a change in membership and do not relate to the pattern I am describing here.

Given the similarities that I have outlined above I consider it appropriate to make linkages between the movement towards religion evidenced within some communes in the 1960s and 70s and the rural communities in this study, namely their movement towards religion as documented in Chapter 8. This has of course not yet come about, what has been detailed can be considered weak attempts to influence the respective communities in this direction. If these attempts are successful however the inherent differences

between the newly formed religious community and the movement that inspired it should not be underestimated. As Ron Roberts has noted there are disadvantages pertaining to set religious structures, namely that they 'resist social innovations' (1971, p. 81). If in time a divergence develops within the community, that is between the religious ideological framework and the lived reality or culture, as it so often does (Berger, 1981, p. 168; Shenker, 1986, p. 44), it could in fact be considered a reification (1981, p. 177). Reifications such as these then constitute a classic grievance commonly associated with the development of social movements (Melucci, 1996, p. 76). In short, the commune itself may come to embody the very features which outraged the movement participants and gave birth to the social movement!

What then of the other possible outcome that I have mentioned above - 'secular dissent'? Given the fact that thus far I have been highlighting the negative aspects of disagreement and communal conflict at the personal level how could a community possibly be united by conflict and dissent? It is feasible to view the perfect society as static and boring and it is in this respect that one can consider the alternative. Rosabeth Kantor here quotes the views of George Kateb.

"The most vitriolic critic of utopian communities on these grounds was George Kateb in *utopia and its enemies*. Condemning the 19th-century communes as "depressing," he argued that any "perfect society" is ultimately unsatisfying. People need change, tension, and stimulation, conflict and war, to make life meaningful, he contended. People prefer not to be happy all the time. What Kateb pictured in the communes was a grey, lifeless, austere existence."(Kanter, 1972, p. 217 & 218).

It is in this vein then that Christopher Brumann's concept of 'secular dissent' makes some rational sense. Brumann has observed that in a small number of communes in the USA, but no less significant for that, a pattern or tradition of secular dissent can be identified. This dissent is usually facilitated by the consensus decision-making process, which exists in all three of the communities I have studied. 'Tolerance of individual needs and whims is therefore the paramount principle' (Brumann, 2001, p. 100). Through the organisational structure then the members are fundamentally bound one to another.

"Contrary to what previous authors have suggested, however, an explicit consensus on aims and objectives is not needed in the long

run, and it may help these cases more to water down the initial agreements than to sustain them by all means or to work towards the creation of new ones. Not utopia, but the trade-off has become their second nature.” (Brumann, 2001, p. 101).

Although Brumann’s theory is relatively recent and tentative in respect to the number of communities that are supposedly displaying this secular dissent, I do consider it can be meaningfully linked to the Brecon and Yosemite communities. Members of Brecon in particular expressed the importance of considering all members when ordering their communal life and I have traced their move away from ideological concepts more generally. This may indicate a reliance upon relational and pragmatic forms of community, based solely upon mutual consent. At Yosemite the ‘Way of Council’ and community members commitment to be ‘in process’ with one another could likewise indicate possible support for Brumann’s theory. However this is complicated by the fact that some members described the ‘Way of Council’ as having spiritual and religious meaning (Int 24 2:00). Also the development of the role of ‘elders’ could undermine the parity of the Council. Although Raven Hill also employed the consensus decision-making process the members did not particularly refer to the process as significant in community bonding. Members instead relied on the pluralistic ethic to ensure that they could pursue their own personal ideological frameworks which were on the whole orientated towards Eco-pagan and alternative spiritual traditions.

9.6 Conclusions

I have outlined concepts, actions and emotions relating to community bonding in all three communities. Perhaps more importantly, I have delineated movements over time of these components which relate to community bonding. I have clearly identified a pluralistic ethic being dominant across all the communities studied and I have put forward evidence to suggest that this pluralistic ethic emanated from the EDA movement that inspired these communities in the first instance.¹⁴⁴ This

¹⁴⁴ Oved describes the gradual move towards pluralism within communes and intentional communities as an increasingly ‘multicultural approach’. The pluralistic ethic I am defining here would appear to relate to his observations, however this research does not suggest at the individual community level that a multiculturalism exists. As I have indicated above the cultural aspects were generally unified, possibly fractured by the

social movement was found to be a classic example of a new social movement, being heterogeneous in political, religious and environmental ideologies, see Chapters 2 and 4. However I have highlighted that the transition from a new social movement to a small community is not without its difficulties (see above 9.4.2.1.) I have suggested that homogenising forces identified as significant by sociologists studying communes within the USA and UK (1960s – 70s) are likewise affecting the environmental communities in the study. The movements that I have delineated in relation to community bonding can therefore be aligned with a similar phenomenon observed within these earlier communes movements. I have cautiously posited that the movement towards a set religious structure as observed within the rural context (see Chapter 8) is a classic response to the homogenising forces inherent within 'gemeinschaft' community. Equally in the urban context I have suggested that the movement away from ideology towards cultural, relational and normative practices may signal a recognition that 'secular dissent' can in fact bond community members together, thereby securing a future for Brecon. Time will tell then if the movements plotted here represent either the inevitable push towards homogenising both ideology and culture (signalling unavoidable limits to diversity) or if a new type of small community structure, one that is ideologically pluralistic, is indeed possible long-term. The analysis contained in Chapters 5 to 9 have now provided a foundation on which to consider the main research question, What is the place and significance of Religion and Spirituality within Environmental Communities?

differences in strategic tendencies. I also note that he does not make any specific reference to the influence to NSM theories (Oved, 2013, p. 245).

~ Chapter 10 ~ Conclusion: 'Religion and Spirituality within Environmental Communities'

What is the place and significance of Religion and Spirituality within Environmental Communities? In Chapters 5 and 6 I explored the substantive characteristics of religion and spirituality and approximated their proportions. During the interviews stark differences emerged between urban and rural contexts. The types of religion and spirituality present within the rural context were found to be almost exclusively centred on nature, nonetheless it was also noted that they were diverse in belief and practice one from another. In the detailed exploration of these beliefs and practices it became apparent that dogmatic beliefs and creeds were shunned (organised religion). The authoritative source being drawn upon by the spiritual traditions present was found to be complex. Wherever it was employed it was certainly considered significant to the individual or group, however its place was often shared with other authoritative sources. The individual or small group therefore determined the authoritative source that was to be adopted and adapted it to suite their personal or group tradition. Although diverse, the forms of religion and spirituality present could be arranged within three main groupings: 1. Eco-paganism, the most dominant spiritual tradition, in effect providing a 'core pagan doxa', for the community as a whole; 2. Eclectic, a much smaller grouping but very distinct in its inclusion of some esoteric beliefs; 3. Core Shamanism (developing) a growing tradition based on the beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples, central in the second community discourse (Chapter 8). Also evident within the rural context were communal spiritual ceremonies, rituals and shrines. A clear distinction could be made here between Raven Hill and Yosemite in that the latter had adopted semiformal structures for communal rituals and also permitted shrines within the communal areas. These features were not present at Raven Hill. It was also noted that some community members in the rural context had developed an 'integrated spiritual practice', shifting from formal set ceremony and ritual to a more continual spiritual awareness when around nature, one that merged with day-to-day activities. The familiar divide between work/play and worship/veneration was therefore challenged and partly broken down. These integrated spiritual practices are essentially centred upon an individual's experience in nature and as such lessens the requirement of congregational or group forms of ritual.

Within the urban context religion and spirituality initially appeared non-existent however during the interviews it became apparent some members maintained alternative spiritual beliefs and practices. Some of these beliefs, the more esoteric ones, attracted criticism and ridicule by other community members. Many urban community members joined in with Solstice and Equinox celebrations but such practices were not accompanied by any meta-empirical beliefs as regularly exist for example within Eco-paganism. One instance of Quaker religious belief was present in the urban context, perhaps indicating an acceptance of diversity, however some community members openly criticised their metaempirical beliefs. Intensely positive experiences of nature were described as spiritual by many urban community members but these instances did not lead to specific spiritual understandings, beliefs or symbolically ritual actions. Nonetheless it was in this context that some community members appeared to be adopting intermediate stances, confusing and challenging the empirical/meta-empirical distinction.

In Chapter 6 I mapped the place of religion and spirituality within the life of the communities. I used the concept of realms, inner, personal, social and public. At Yosemite spiritual traditions were practised by most members and therefore unsurprisingly inhabited the personal and inner realms. Due to the numbers of members practising spiritual traditions the social realm was also a place of spiritual expression, as evidenced by communal rituals and the presence of shrines. For the few atheist members at Yosemite they commonly encountered spiritual traditions within the social realm and this was generally considered a positive aspect of community life. In terms of the public realm Yosemite hosted a number of gatherings and workshops that were orientated towards nature-centred spirituality. This was a clear indication to those beyond the community, the public, that such spiritual traditions were practised and respected. At Raven Hill the situation was very similar except that spiritual traditions did not inhabit the social realm to the same degree as Yosemite. There were no semiformal structures relating to group ceremony or visible shrines in the communal areas. Raven Hill did not express to the public realm beyond any association with a particular spiritual tradition. In the urban context at Brecon the situation was very different. Spiritual traditions, usually eclectic where present, were restricted to the inner and personal realms. Within the social realm organised religion was openly criticised for its damaging effects, both socially and environmentally. Spirituality though, was tolerated as being a community members' personal choice. Brecon did not express to the public realm beyond any association

with a particular spiritual tradition. The mapping of religion and spirituality assisted me in understanding the role of religion and spirituality within the three communities.

During the interviews in the rural context I directed discussions towards religion and spirituality. Two strong community discourses emerged: 1. Criticism towards eclectic and esoteric spiritual traditions (discussed in Chapter 7) and 2. Criticism of the 'Art of Mentoring' movement (discussed in Chapter 8). The first community discourse then, related to the two strategic tendencies that although very different were in fact present within the same community. This discourse within the community was actually found to be a continuation of the dominant discourse within the 1990s road protests surrounding motives and methods to bring about movement goals. These strategic tendencies within the communities in fact proved more divisive culturally than ideologically. Although in general one culture existed in the rural context the strategic tendencies exhibited distinct cultural differences that impacted on daily life. Work practices in particular were found to be contentious with the fluffy culture disrupting or obstructing the spiky cultures desire for instrumental progress. It was not uncommon for these tensions to be conflated or assimilated as solely relating to the spiritual traditions practised by some community members. I also noted that the proportion of strategic tendencies expressed in the urban and rural context was different. The rural context could be described as mixed whereas the urban context was predominantly spiky. The community discourse surrounding strategic tendencies was acknowledged by the vertical line of my fourfold typology of environmental communities (Table 2), separating activist and tribal (direct action) from experimental and nature-centred (exemplary lifestyle). The other, horizontal access, related to the embracing of advanced technology and this too was found to be different within the urban and rural context. It could be said that modern science and technology was embraced much more willingly within the urban context than in the rural. There seemed to be less tension by these community members in accepting the benefits that modern science brought. Having acknowledged this difference it could also be said that the use of advanced technology in the rural context was far more prevalent than the rhetoric of community members suggested. I also noted in Chapter 7 that the two tendencies or strands have become more separated at the movement level, effectively developing into separate supportive networks, Radical Roots (Spiky) and LILI, Permaculture network (fluffy).

The second community discourse (Chapter 8) centred on criticisms by some community members towards the Art of Mentoring movement which I have identified as Core Shamanism (developing) where present within the rural communities. A number of community members were exploring this more structured spiritual tradition based on the beliefs and practices disseminated within the Art of Mentoring movement. The community discourse essentially related to the threat of being taken over, or dominated by, a very different type of spiritual tradition, one that was more structured and resembled organised religion. This would indeed be a challenge to the dominant Eco-Pagan tradition and the eclectic spiritual tradition. Perhaps even more significant however the religious nature of this tradition would also challenge the deeply engrained implicit pluralistic ethic that has dominated past movements and community life.

In Chapter 9 I considered the functional aspects of religion and spirituality and evaluated whether they had any role in community life. To answer this specific question I surveyed the wider context by outlining the implicit pluralistic ethic which was found to be present at all three communities. Ideological frameworks generally (environmental, political and religious) were found to be heterogeneous, a characteristic carried over from earlier social movements. Similar to the EDA movement, and in keeping with new social movement theories, the environmental communities in the study placed an importance on values, lifestyle and culture which inevitably diminished the role of ideology. Conversely then, the lifestyle and cultural patterns adopted within the communities could be considered more homogeneous. This homogeneous aspect surrounding lifestyle explains why community discourses around food and work patterns appeared potentially divisive. The above factors could in fact be framed in such a way as to claim that religious, spiritual and political differences have been transcended within environmental communities. For instance long-standing distinctions such as the religious/non-religious divide, could be considered insignificant in comparison to the ultimate environmental goals and activity. Yet the findings of this study, in particular the community discourses in Chapters 7 and 8, challenge this understanding, religious and political frameworks are indeed relevant and significant to community life. The discourses and tensions in relation to religion and spirituality that I have outlined in the earlier chapters explain the hesitancy of environmental communities to adopt a fully blown explicit plural ideology, 'Pluralism'. Hence a lesser explicit 'pluralistic ethic' appears to hold sway.

Another significant finding of this research is the degree to which land and nature itself was found to be bonding community members together in the rural context. I have termed this particular phenomenon 'organic embodied solidarity'. Individuals within the rural context expressed how they felt bonded together by their body experiences whilst interacting with the organic environment. Such body experiences may have been the result of interacting as a group with nature (sometimes associated with learning) or experienced alone in nature and discussed later with other members of the community. There is an assumption that these body experiences, which are actively sought by members, are the same or very similar to the body experiences of others within the group. These positive body experiences in turn find expression in patterns of behaviour or green scripts, that typically venerate nature and in so doing further the feeling of organic embodied solidarity. It is not only positive body experiences that engender positive forms of organic embodied solidarity, the challenging conditions of just living within a 'low-impact' community also produces a form of camaraderie, a type born of enduring the harsh conditions together. Still it cannot be presumed that all personal or group interactions with nature will automatically inculcate positive forms of organic embodied solidarity. As identified above strategic tendencies and differences in relation to spiritual beliefs can fracture the potential for solidarity.

Organic embodied solidarity can be considered a form of 'collective identity', as elaborated upon in Chapter 2.2. However it is a distinct type in that it is predominately formed at the group level and heavily weighted towards affectual relationships connected to body experiences within the organic environment. Consequentially the cognitive frameworks, that are so critical in the formation of collective identity within NSMs, are much reduced. The bonding aspects of this type of collective identity are located within the body of the community member; and are therefore founded upon a particular type of habitus (see Chapter 1.2).

I draw attention to the choices made by community members; they choose to place themselves in contexts that they can connect with nature. In exercising this choice they emphasise they are alternative to the mainstream culture, they have therefore constructed this aspect of their collective identity. This can be contrast with indigenous peoples whose way of life community members sometimes attempt to replicate. Indigenous people will usually have lived in their environment since birth and do not always have the ability to choose either the urban or suburban environment.

The identification of an organic solidarity in the rural context also highlights the effects of the everyday environment upon community members. Distinct differences between urban and rural environmental communities can be attributed to the prevailing environment in which community members have chosen to inhabit. A rural context offers unlimited contact with nature, this contrasting with an urban context which does not offer the same opportunity for continuous connection with nature. I maintain that continual exposure to the natural environment has a direct impact on the body and mind of each rural community member resulting in a particularly intense relationship with the landscape. Cognitively these understandings of nature are founded on innumerable, continuous body experiences. For some rural community members there appears to be a reluctance to formulate an explicit cognitive understanding of these experiences, hence the ambiguous term and concept of 'nature connection', which relates to a person's raw unadulterated experience of nature. In these cases bonding is predominantly founded on body experience and societal forms, and therefore only partly cognitive. Others however choose a spiritual, meta-empirical framework to make sense of such experiences. Within both approaches there appears to be a significant veneration of, appreciation of, intense relationship with, nature, this being palpably different to the urban context. These differences, which I have described in detail above (Chapters 5 & 6), are largely implicit but nonetheless constitute different environmental practices, traditions or habitus.

Overall it can be concluded that religion and spirituality within environmental communities is complex in that it is both accepted, in line with a pluralistic ethic, yet is occasionally contested and resisted. The degree to which these two stances are adopted in urban and rural contexts is markedly different. Within the rural context spirituality and occasionally religion is accepted and expressed within the social realm. Furthermore spirituality did indeed play a role in community cohesion along with other personal, relational and normative practices. The role that it played was certainly not a dominant one but should be comprehended as a background bonding effect (core pagan doxa), which contributes to a complex eclectic mix of environmental, religious, and political frameworks. Within the urban context both religion and spirituality could not in any way be interpreted as playing a bonding role within the community, they are frequently contested and questioned. Urban communities were predominantly bonded through personal, relational and normative practices. An eclectic mix of political ideologies also played a weaker role in community cohesion this possibly being similar to the core

pagan doxa in the rural context but based on political and environmental ideologies.

I will now reflect upon the similarities that exist between the various categories and typologies that I have utilised and developed in this thesis. It is possible to synchronise some of these categories, thereby strengthening the validity of the distinctions I have used to understand community life. I would argue the most significant distinction that I have recognised relates to the community discourse surrounding strategic philosophies as outlined in Chapter 7 (spiky/fluffy). Since this particular discourse is so broad ranging and relevant to the EDA movement it provides a stable base on which to compare all the other categories and typologies I have employed. I will begin by commenting on the categories that correspond closely with the different strategic tendencies and then move on to discuss those that seem to have some resemblance, but are complicated by other relevant factors.

The first category which compares favourably with the strategic tendencies, spiky/fluffy, is the distinction indicated by the vertical line in my four fold typology of environmental communities (labelled strategic philosophies in Table 2). This line separates the Experimental, Nature Centred communities (Exemplary Lifestyle) from the Activist, Tribal (Direct Action) communities, fluffy and spiky respectively. As I have acknowledged in Chapter 3 this distinction observed by Zablocki and others is extremely influential. It provides a credible explanation of how alternative communities generally and environmental communities are different in organisation and culture. The features I have highlighted in relation to nature centred religion can also be mapped onto my selected baseline; spiky/fluffy. Here I am referring to the animist/esoteric distinction (Jamison Chapter 4.5), Eco-Paganism type 1/type 2 (Letcher Chapter 4.5), integrated spiritual practice/symbolic ritual (Chapter 5.4.1). I have already commented in each of these sections on their similarities; that is the esoteric; with type 1 Eco-Paganism, symbolic rituals, and animist; with type 2 Eco-Paganism, integrated spiritual practice. I now link them specifically to the strategic tendencies, fluffy/spiky respectively. The fluffy emphasis on internal personal consciousness correlates well with the imaginary symbolic rituals so prevalent within type 1 Eco-paganism. Likewise the spiky emphasis on the external physical aspects of the environment corresponds well with animism, integrated spiritual practices - which are set within everyday actions - and the practical expression of pagan beliefs in type 2 Eco-Paganism. Also closely connected with the rituals I have commented upon is Lévy-Bruhl's identification of 'participation'

and 'instrumental causality' (Chapter 6.3.3). I would also claim that these too relate to the strategic tendencies. The participation mode of thought, with its emphasis on the immediate (synchronic) aspects of human experience, closely resembles the fluffy tendency, particularly in terms of its focus on emotions. The instrumental causality mode of thought, with its emphasis on rational cause and effect (diachronic), especially in relation to external objects, resembles the spiky tendency with its external, task focus.

Mellor and Shilling's theoretical framework in relation to embodiment provides a helpful analytical tool for further understanding the different strategic tendencies (Chapter 9.4.1); forms of embodiment, forms of sociality and forms of knowing. Forms of embodiment should be understood as important to both tendencies, however the particular forms of embodiment that are sought are different. The fluffy tendency seeks out embodied experiences to enhance personal consciousness; embodied experiences of nature, for example, constitute a significant resource for internal reflection and imagination. The prominent flow therefore is from external to internal. The spiky tendency, though, experiences forms of embodiment in relation to altering the physical environment, completing tasks and changing the physical world for the betterment of all. The prominent flow therefore is from internal to external. Likewise, forms of sociality are evident within both tendencies but again the forms of sociality sought are different. The fluffy tendency seeks social interaction to enhance feelings of group harmony. This again forms a significant resource for internal reflection and imagination. The spiky tendency however seeks social interaction in relation to task; accomplishment in the external environment. The recognition above of work days and their proclivity to bond community members together would serve as an appropriate example here (Chapter 9.2). In relation to forms of knowing I need to consider the further subdivision of the framework; that is the differences between 'carnal knowing' and 'cognitive apprehension' (Chapter 9.4.1); It would appear that an underlying correlation exists. Cognitive apprehension can be linked to the fluffy tendency - the internal personal consciousness which is at times disembodied and esoteric. Conversely, carnal knowing can be linked to the spiky tendency - the external experiences gained through the body and interaction with the external environment. Still it could not be concluded that the spiky tendency is any less cognitive since it relies upon rational, causal modes of thought that are diachronic; orientated towards the future. Importantly this future orientated thought is not always connected directly to experiences of the body or evidenced in the environment. It would seem therefore that both

spiky and fluffy tendencies contain cognitive apprehension: yet what can be identified as different are the intensions inherent within these forms of thought. The spiky tendency engages in cognitive apprehension which is at times disembodied but essentially it is concerned with returning to the physical aspects of body and environment. The Fluffy tendency, in contrast, engages in cognitive apprehension which is also at times disembodied, however this tendency is not continuously concerned with returning to the physical aspects of body and environment. It may well be content dwelling within a disembodied cognitive apprehension.

In Chapter 8 I utilised Marion Bowman's triangle, highlighting the theme of authority in the religious and spiritual traditions that were practiced. Here too some features may be mapped onto my baseline. The eclectic category, that I associated with the authority of the individual, corresponds well with the fluffy tendency. The fluffy emphasis on internal personal experience reveals the importance of the individual. The Eco-Pagan tradition, which I associated with the authority of the group, corresponds well with the spiky tendency; the very practical, direct action, forms of ritual. Yet as discussed above, this is less applicable to type 1 Eco-Paganism. The core Shamanism (developing) tradition with its emphasis on the authoritative source is, I would maintain, somewhat problematic in relation to strategic tendencies. Both tendencies appear to draw to some degree upon an authoritative source, either political or religious. Yet as I have detailed in Chapter 8.4.3 the authoritative source is directed by either the individual or group.

And finally what about Organic embodied solidarity (Chapter 9.4.1): where could this form of community bonding be placed on my baseline? My initial inclination would be to place organic embodied solidarity within the spiky tendency given its trait for bonding through challenging environments and shared tasks. Still some of its features in fact appear closer to the fluffy tendency. Here I am referring to the appreciation of the aesthetical aspects of nature/land and the feeling evoked. Such appreciation often constitutes a significant resource for individual internal reflection and imagination as well as a platform to develop a more communal type of appreciation. Both tendencies then are operating within organic embodied solidarity yet I would suggest a greater weighting could be attributed to the spiky tendency.

These similarities then substantiate further the utility of strategic tendencies when attempting to comprehend community discourses. The spiky and fluffy categories have defined key variations that could in fact be described as different traditions of environmentalism. These distinct traditions have within

environmental communities developed two different support networks and gather together at the movement level in different places (Chapter 7.4).

To augment my conclusions I offer my account of how these three environmental communities came into existence and have evolved. I begin with the EDA movement and 1990s road protests of which the majority of community members participated. This movement had very strong instrumental goals associated with environmental concern, this clear purpose acted as a type of banner beneath which an array of ideologies coexisted. This movement then, was ideologically pluralistic in terms of politics, philosophy and religion. Political and religious concepts were adopted and adapted to progress the movement as a whole. In the scope of religion and spirituality movement goals helped bridge the empirical/meta-empirical distinction, encompassing both atheists and esoteric eclectics. This ideological diversity did not result in multiple cultures, on the protest sites a single and distinct subculture developed as movement participants lived together experiencing nature. Some fundamental differences did however become apparent, these coalescing around the strategic philosophies, spiky fluffy. When the movement dissipated at the end of the 1990s some movement participants wanted to continue a communal lifestyle with their friends and therefore established settled environmental communities. At this stage the different strategic tendencies influenced movement participants, with the spiky tendency predominantly moving more to the urban or suburban locations and the fluffy tendency to the rural. Within these communities it quickly became apparent that the continuation of political activism at the movement level was simply not sustainable. Energy and focus were therefore redirected to local interests and relational, cultural practices. This development consequently resulted in the erosion of the movement banner, so to speak, the overall movement identity which initially united the participants. This erosion coupled with the seemingly inherent forces within small community, which tend to homogenise both ideology and culture, have brought about a type of identity crisis at the community level. For although the ideological component has seemingly become less significant and relational and cultural practices more so, this does not equate to the component being totally irrelevant. An ideological component will surely develop either from the very community culture itself or be adopted from outside or, most likely, be made from a fusion of both. The ideological component in this situation may then be considered a buttress, one that is an expression of past and existing cultural and normative practices but also

a component that directs the same into the future, securing the longer term prospect and transcending the vulnerability of solely living in the present.

The most likely future scenario for environmental communities both urban and rural is that they will adopt, or not resist being swept up by the forces of, another social movement. This new movement with its fresh banner will secure the dominant pluralistic ethic. This has of course some precedent in the history of the commune movements, both the 19th and 20th century. The other possibility, currently being explored at Raven Hill and Yosemite, is the adoption of a set religious ideology. This too has precedents within the history of the commune movements. Such a development though, even if very alternative to mainstream religion, is likely to come into conflict with the wider social movement which birthed the community. The structured religious form, which is so bonding, invariably diminishes the pluralistic ethic. Consequently relations to the wider movement would have to diminish and eventually be severed. In the meantime 'Secular dissent' as identified by Brumann may provide an intermediate strategy for the survival of the communities. If such a pattern continues longer term, and in the context of communes this equates to 25, 50 or even 150 years, this may well constitute a new model for community bonding, one that would firmly retain a pluralistic ethic.

For clarity I will now define the original contribution of this research. The greater part of original material within this study concerns my classification and detailed analysis of religion and spirituality within environmental communities UK. Academic research and analysis of religion and spirituality previous to this study has been minimal, loosely defined as 'new-age' or solely confined to contemporary paganism (Jamison, 2011; Pepper & Hallam, 1991, p. 108). This is the first sustained attempt to comprehensively define the forms of religion and spirituality practised within environmental communities, comparing them one with another and also comparing their proportions in urban and rural contexts. In relation to the comparisons I made I also developed the model indicating the degree of authoritative source (Figure 6) as detailed in Chapter 8. This model proved helpful in identifying the functional aspects of each spiritual tradition and plotting the movement of some community members towards more organised forms of religion. My mapping of the place of religion within environmental communities is also an original contribution, the; Inner, Personal, Social and Public realms. By drawing on established sociological distinctions I developed an original framework that demarcated where religion and

spirituality was expressed and practiced (Johnson, 1995, p. 240). Once these realms were identified the framework was useful in comparing the, often subtle, differences between the communities studied and indeed between urban and rural contexts.

This study is the first detailed exploration of dialogues surrounding religion and spirituality within environmental communities. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 outlined significant discourses relating to religious/spiritual and non-religious /non-spiritual members and between members practising different spiritual traditions.

The firm identification of different strategic tendencies as existing within environmental communities at the movement level is original. Also unique is the assessment of religion and spirituality within the two tendencies and my evaluation of the proportions in urban and rural contexts. I have clearly documented above an unusual phenomenon, a situation in which both strategic tendencies are actually coexisting within individual environmental communities (Raven Hill and Yosemite) and furthermore I have documented the tensions that this causes.

My detailed assessment and analysis of the role of religion and spirituality in relation to community bonding is new. The thesis presents an original account of how religion and spirituality interacts with the environmental theme and other long established philosophical frameworks. Previous studies have, in general, concentrated solely on environmental or political frameworks and not referred to the considerable sociological analysis of religion in the 1960s communes movement as I have done above. This research is the first to explicitly identify a specific form of community bonding in the rural context, 'organic embodied solidarity'. I have outlined its basic features and explained its role in community bonding.

Finally the fourfold typology for environmental communities that I outlined in Chapter 3.5.2 (Table 2) is original. It develops further Benjamin Zablocki's classification of strategic philosophies by combining the bright green/dark green distinction (1980, p. 204). This unique combination then forms an effective framework on which environmental communities can be assessed and categorised.

What relevance does this research have beyond the confines of environmental communities? Firstly, the findings will be of interest to academics studying social movements in general and environmental movements in particular. The trajectories of community members traced

here, from environmental social movements to communal ventures, provide a significant source of data. The tensions I have outlined in continuing social movement structures on into small-scale community, and the interaction between the small affinity group and the larger scale social movement, would likewise be of interest. The analysis in Chapter 7, differences in strategic philosophy at the social movement level, would in all likelihood relate to many Western social movements and could, along with other supporting research, contribute to a theory that such divisions are likely to arise in future Western social movements. In relation to environmental movements more generally the research contributes to academic understandings of how movement participants bond together around the environmental theme. Analysis here suggests a complex relationship with longer standing religious and political frameworks, hence this study will be relevant to both political theory and religious studies. The identification here of 'organic embodied solidarity' will be of interest to academics who are exploring bonding around the environmental theme, especially differences between built and organic environments. Beyond the academy 'organic embodied solidarity' will be of interest to movement participants and environmental organisations that are experimenting with, and encouraging the expansion of, sustainable modes of living.

Sociologists studying small-scale communities will find the research findings applicable in relation to the ideological diversity discovered. The identification here of a pluralistic ethic and a lesser degree of diversity within the community culture and lived practice will also be relevant.

The examination here of alternative spiritualities and Eco-Paganism in the community setting is relevant to study of these traditions elsewhere. Particularly significant is the progression of some community members from alternative spiritual traditions towards more organised forms of religion as described in Chapter 8. Also relevant is the development of contemporary paganism and Eco-Paganism in response to direct and sustained contact with the organic environment. As outlined in Chapter 5 this tended to impact on the way rituals were conducted, as some community members adopted a more integrated spiritual approach.

A recurring theme within this research has been community bonding. In the academic study of small-scale (*gemeinschaft*) communities more generally, the phenomenon of community members choosing to bond around the environmental theme is relatively new. Even so, I have documented above substantial changes that have already taken place since the early 1990s, the

most noteworthy being the advancement of 'nature connection' and 'organic embodied solidarity'. It appears most likely then, given the continuing dominance of the environmental theme in Western culture, that environmental communities will continue in the near future. However it must also be anticipated that they will continue to develop and change. Will the environmental theme and nature connection continue to bond community members together in the future or will longer-standing religious and political frameworks reassert their dominance? Only time will reveal. In the meantime I am hopeful that there will be increasing academic interest towards these communities and the themes explored above.

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List of Abbreviations

(AOMM)	Art Of Mentoring Movement
(BEN)	Black Environment Network
(CAT)	Centre for Alternative Technology
(DEM)	Deep Ecology Movement
(EDA)	Environmental Direct Action
(EMO)	Environmental Movement Organisation
(EMOs)	Environmental Movement Organisations
(LILI)	Low-Impact Living Initiative
(NSM)	New Social Movement
(NSMs)	New Social Movements
(NVDA)	Non Violent Direct Action