

Re-Assembling Community:
Landscape, Commons, and Local Facts in Scottish Community Land Ownership

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Abstract

Community buyouts in Scotland arose in the early 1990s, driven by a grassroots movement of residents of large estates in the Scottish Highland and Islands who were unhappy with management practices and neglect under private ownership. The movement grew in popularity as new buyouts received state legal and financial support. Estates that transitioned to community ownership have, on the whole, achieved greater success in retaining younger residents, developing renewable energy projects, and growing new businesses on their estates. Current research lacks a strong model for explaining why community ownership has been successful, as well as why some community trusts have faltered or failed to connect with subsets of the residential population.

This study interrogates the dynamics that emerge from community ownership at the points at which the human population interacts with the landscape. This work establishes a theoretical framework which builds upon feminist geographies, commons theory, and science and technology studies to propose a model of community dynamics that can produce large changes in outcomes under community ownership. This model of community centers around a "binding commons," or common property arrangement within a community which both shapes the form of community and is shaped by it. To ground this in empirical work, I use landscape inventory methods to locate sites of strong activity, tension, or importance on or near community-owned estates. Drawing on these results, I focus on small community shops on each estate. Interview data demonstrate how by acting as a binding commons, each shop produces a form of community infrastructure which facilitates the provision of work and information needs across the community.

In turn, this model helps make sense of the dynamics which arose while managing community-owned assets, as presented by current and former trust leaders in multiple narratives in their encounters with difficult projects or questions. These accounts also demonstrate that the specific structures and forms of attachment to binding commons may result in unequal empowerment of community members. From these narratives, I demonstrate how community infrastructure provides valuable mediation and provision of work and information. I then offer a discussion of how the binding commons model illuminates relationality between human and non-human members of the community and the landscape, and use this illumination to address the awkwardness of decolonization in the context of land reform in rural Scotland.

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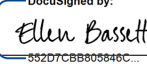



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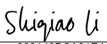

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Introduction

Perhaps the most enduring aspect of field work, and why we keep doing it, is the surprises it brings. One can read papers and maps and descriptions until the eyes bleed, but once the boot sole hits the dirt, the surprises start coming. And on every trip I made, it took less than 48 hours for them to start coming fast and furious. As it turned out, there were lots of them, but I really don't think anything caught me off guard quite like the palm trees or the public toilets.

The palm trees were surprising because they were growing on a cold Scottish island, the toilets because people kept identifying them as particularly important parts of community-owned estates.

Both surprises were of the sort that came up during my field work trips in 2016 and 2018 to study the emergence and relative successes of community ownership in Scotland. That success of community ownership itself qualifies as a surprise in its own right. The community buyout movement took its first small steps in the early 1990s, when a string of rural estates in the highlands and islands were purchased on the open market by community-led trusts, which have subsequently held them in community ownership. Here, in some very remote places where shrinking and aging populations are the norm that attend faltering and contingent economies, small groups of people were doing the exact opposite of what a cross-disciplinary theoretical consensus confidently recommended, and despite this, achieving remarkable results.

These results are only more puzzling given that no two trusts have followed precisely the same formula. There are nearly as many strategies for success as there are community trusts. Different community land-owning bodies have focused on housing, renewable energy, business development, tourism infrastructure, tenure security, forest management, and native woodland replanting. Further, as Ian Hepburn, then chair of Community Land Scotland, told me as he drove me around the community-owned forestry on Mull, no community trust has yet gone bankrupt, whereas 40% of private startups go bankrupt within five years. At a distance, then, the community owned estates in Scotland appear to be taking the same sets of assets and liabilities as private owners had, consistently completing projects at a higher rate of success with a lower rate of bankruptcy. All of this is effectively exactly the opposite of what late 20th century economic orthodoxy says should happen.

When I showed up to find out why this is happening, the local residents and trust leaders told me about the toilets. And at roughly the same latitude as Stockholm or Juneau, there were palm trees growing there.

To explain why I mention this, let me first back up a bit.

Shortly after my visit in 2018, the Assynt Crofters Trust held a "*Fèis in the Fank*¹" to celebrate the 25th anniversary of completing the community purchase of the North Assynt Estate on which its members lived. The anniversary celebration was thrown by and for the crofters of Assynt, but closure of the deal in 1993 also marked the first instance of a finalized community buyout anywhere in Scotland. The idea of community ownership had emerged

¹ "festival in the sheepfold"

from earlier debates about land reform in Scotland, and in Assynt, for the first time, it reached the point of completion, the closure of the deal. More buyouts followed closely after in the 1990s, and when the newly devolved Scottish Parliament re-convened in 2000 for the first time in centuries. In its first seating, the Labour-led government quickly passed a number of land reform bills that culminated in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The act established two new formal rights to buy for Highland communities in general and for crofting communities specifically. The creation of the Scottish Land Fund to support buyouts financially accelerated the movement, so that by the early 2010s over a half million acres in the Highlands and islands were owned by community landlords. Another land reform act in 2016 included further rights to buy, and also expanded the current rights to all of Scotland, including urban areas.

As an anecdotal indication of how much these buyouts continue to be a relevant phenomenon, by sheer chance one of my short fieldwork visits coincided with a celebration ceilidh of the Pairc Trust taking ownership of its estate after a protracted 13 year struggle, while another coincided with the handover ceremony for the completion of an accelerated 8 month campaign to purchase the island of Ulva.

Because of the requirements of the academic calendar, these fieldwork visits happened in late May through early July, and as such I spent a lot of time on Scotland's west coast during the warmest months of the year. The temperatures out on islands like Eigg stayed well below 60 degrees Fahrenheit most days I was there, and the frequent cold rain often sent me back to my tent or "glamping" hut shivering in my layers of thermal clothing.

I mention the cold in the middle of summer to explain that I really was not expecting to see palm trees, but there they were, unmistakable, growing along the drive up to the old

landlord's lodge. Specifically, the only place they were growing on the island was next to the drive up to the old lodge. Like other rural estates, the vegetation around the lodge was completely different than the rest of the island, as it had been planted with a range of exotic ornamentals under the management of various landlords outfitting their highland getaways. Outside of the immediate environs of the lodge, there were pastures of grasses being invaded by bracken fern, forest plantations of Sitka spruce being cut and replaced by native hardwoods, "polytunnels" (or hoop houses) with lettuces and berries, and crofts whose inbye² land held small tilled beds and often a rowan tree growing in the front yard. So the palms were certainly not spreading over the island, but as I learned the Atlantic ocean wind that can make you shiver in July also generally prevents temperatures from getting below freezing.

The ornamentals like palm trees on Eigg, Gigha, Ulva, and other estates were, like the expansive houses they surrounded, relics of the islands being purchased with wealth accumulated elsewhere, which was also used to bring in the kind of living artifacts from elsewhere that designated it a space of elite living. Under community ownership, however, the fates of many of these houses and their gardens diverged. Most trusts had sold off the grand old mansions on the estates due to their high cost of maintenance and negative associations with the position of being a "laird" that the house entailed. The gardens, on the other hand, have been embraced by the community landlords, who regularly organize volunteer labor efforts to keep and maintain them.

² Crofting will be discussed much more in later sections, but crofting tenure usually provides a private slice of "inbye" land and a swath of shared common grazings.

Similarly, when I settled on my question list, I wrestled with the questions that asked respondents about the most important places in their communities, along with the most important projects the trust had undertaken. While I deliberately left the questions as open as possible to allow the answers to be as broad as possible, as will happen with any study design, I had potential answers in mind. I have to say, though, I was not expecting multiple residents and trust leaders on multiple trusts to tell me about the toilets. I do not doubt that some amount of dry Scottish wit was at work, but the answer was, I believe, mostly sincere, given that both interviewees immediately gave supporting details:

Michael: Are there any buildings or built facilities on the trust that you'd say are the most important? . . .

Respondent 1: The toilet up at the lighthouse – that has been such a major attraction. It's become –

Michael: The toilet?

Respondent 1 The toilet has become a tourist attraction, [laughs] because it's the most remote toilet in – in the UK or something. It's some stupid accolade. People come out to get their photo taken at the toilet.

Respondent 2: A – a Japanese film about the Old Man of Stoer – and a TV documentary company came over last year. They spent a whole day filming that Stoer lighthouse, and the majority of the documentary was about the toilet. So you now get Japanese people who come all the way up here to have their photograph taken next to the sign on the door.

Likewise, a board member of the North West Mull Community Woodland Trust

described the trust's major activities as follows:

Interviewee: So that's kind of the core of what the woodland company is, but the woodland company also . . . we run a wood fuel business. We've created woodland crofts. . . . We've got plans for housing. We've got a micro hydro scheme up and running. We're looking at woodland burials, we're hopeful of that. And we run the Dervaig toilets, that's before all the Ulva stuff.

Michael: You run the Dervaig what?

Interviewee: The, the Dervaig toilets, we um, what happened, the Dervaig toilets got, like the public toilets got closed by the council cause they couldn't afford to keep running it. We did get on to run it. Eventually it was so dangerous people were falling in the holes in the toilet. So we closed them, and then, we have bought the site from the council. Eventually through asset transfer, took about 10 years to get

that to happen. And we're at the point of trying to get new toilets in place, so basically we run the Dervaig toilets actually.

This response underscores exactly how toilets, among other public facilities, have ended up in the hands of community organizations. The Scottish government has some control over allocation of public funds, some of which it then transfers to local council areas. However, the primary power of taxation and government provision of operating funds continues to reside in the Westminster or UK-wide government, which has been controlled by an austerity-minded Tory party for over a decade. With neoliberal cuts in public funds, basic public facilities such as public toilets have fallen to local public groups to undertake and maintain. Where these facilities were previously deemed a government responsibility, the withdrawal of public support funds means they either fall into disrepair or must be taken up by local groups. In the instances of the Stoer lighthouse and Dervaig toilets, the community trusts have taken over maintenance, but in the case of the An Laimhrig facility at the Eigg pier and the public shop at the trailheads at Glencanisp, community trusts have added and expanded available toilet and shower facilities.

In areas heavily dependent on tourist economies, plainly necessary public toilets take on an increased significance, and with local councils closing them or reducing maintenance funds, an unglamorous but essential piece of public infrastructure becomes at risk. In this gap, community trusts such as NWMWCW have taken surplus revenue from other sources, such as renewable energy installations or forestry businesses, and re-directed it to the repair and maintenance of the public toilets. However, the flow of revenue from forestry sales to public toilets is not the only kind of transaction happening here. At some level, the need was assessed and prioritized, a decision was made to take on the project, and funds were located in order to cover the costs. Further, someone or some group of people who were likely not

getting paid to do so went and inspected the toilets and then researched the best means of repairing or replacing them. Money, labor, information, and decisions were organized, transferred, or executed.

Objective

I do not mention palm trees growing at a latitude of nearly 57 degrees N, or trust leaders telling me about toilets before mentioning showier projects just to recycle the theme of the dumbfounded field researcher. In the course of research, these are the kinds of things that Bruno Latour might call displacements, or that Susan Leigh Star would call stories or sayings that make her ethnographic "nose twitch." In and of themselves, they may be little more than funny anecdotes, but they may also be indicators of something more dramatic happening underneath.

This research began as an inquiry into what has made community ownership a success in Scotland, with an eye both towards how to improve upon it as well as how to reproduce that success elsewhere. The eventual trajectory it took, however, emerged from these kinds of experiences doing fieldwork, particularly my preliminary trip as I raced around the highlands trying to visit as many as I could manage in a little under three weeks. I was trying to understand the commonalities between the trusts that determined their successes, but the enormous variation between them—including in age, organizational structure, signature projects, local personalities, economic drivers, and outlooks—were as befuddling as the palm tree moments were surprising. Initially this left me at a loss for what I should be asking about or paying attention to, as each trust seemed to provide a different answer.

What I found was that when I started examining these moments of controversy, displacement, or just "nose twitches" as indicators of different kinds of ties or actions happening between residents, projects, places, animals, plants, buildings, and so forth, the kinds of connections that appeared began to look similar. In both the case of the palm trees and of the toilets, a further investigation of the story reveals a kind of discursive space of collective decisions, claims, values, aesthetics, ties, labor, responses to governance, and implicit articulations of inclusion and exclusion.

In this study I interpret that discursive space to be essentially *community* itself. I use a set of integrated methods and data sources to model community dynamics as a powerful space of translation and mediation. I propose a model of how projects such as those undertaken by community trusts shape and are shaped by community, and how this processes produces "community infrastructure." This kind of social infrastructure can then facilitate the organization of work, information, material resources, and other assets of collective enterprise. In so doing, I contribute to the existing literature on community ownership, and situate the relative successes in such a way that it becomes easier to apply the Scottish experience elsewhere.

Positioning

The community land buyout movement and the community trusts created by it are now old enough and have received enough scholarly attention that some consensus can be said to have been reached. I review many of these detailed evaluations in Chapter 2. These evaluations demonstrate a variety of outcomes, but a strong trend in community ownership towards local achievement of goals broadly agreed upon by state actors as well as locals:

halting population loss, local environmental regeneration, construction of new housing or rehabilitation of declining housing stock, carbon-free energy generation projects (particularly wind and hydroelectric), development of new businesses, new jobs, and so forth.

I must emphasize that close examination of these outcomes shows that they are hardly uniform in either magnitude or in type, and that no community has emerged from a community buyout unscathed by conflicts, division, exhaustion, and controversy. Even the most enthusiastic community ownership supporters whom I read, spoke with, or otherwise corresponded with would readily caution that the community buyout road, even with substantial state support, was "not for everyone." Rather, it requires immense amounts of hard work with very little financial remuneration. And yet, if taken in aggregate and examined as a rural economic and planning initiative, it stands out for its rare status as a highly reliable and cost-effective intervention from the state, while at the same time being at least in part driven by the aspirations and guidance of local residents and community members.

At this point it is probably appropriate to discuss my own status, purpose, and standpoint with respect to this. Several scholarly accounts of community ownership have been undertaken by people with deep, complex ties to the communities they study, or who spent years in field work within those communities. For instance, among the researchers I reference heavily in this paper, Alastair McIntosh served as one of the initial board members of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust before writing his popular press book, *Soil and Soul* as well as his Ph.D. thesis on the links between land reform and liberation theology. Isobel MacPhail wrote her doctoral dissertation on years of field interviews of the Assynt Crofters Trust,

while holding a crofting tenancy on the North Assynt Estate through the early days of the Trust's ownership. Fiona MacKenzie lived in North Harris for several years while analyzing the North Harris Trust using theory from feminist geography. Beyond that, influential authors including James Hunter and Andy Wightman continue to work in land reform in multiple official capacities, both with the Scottish government and in non-governmental organizations such as Community Land Scotland.

As such, not only am I entering a space where considerable observation and theorization has already been done, I am doing so at a considerable observational disadvantage. Even my most ambitious initial fieldwork plans for this dissertation maxed out at six months, and the constraints of finances, travel, and new parenthood pared that back to a frantic and splintered 13 weeks over three visits in two years. I will spend a considerable number of words here discussing the production of local knowledge and its visibility to outside actors. However, it should be taken as axiomatic that as an American arriving for short stints, by necessity, during the tourist season, I will have missed great chunks of nuance and entire sets of dynamics operating beyond my visibility, to which local scholars and actors have far more access.

My contribution to this scholarship must therefore lean heavily into what's possible in these constraints. In response, I place concepts limited viewpoints, situated knowledges, fact production, statecraft, and knowledge translation at the center, theoretically, of this work.

Organization

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 starts with a brief history of Scottish land reform and how the community ownership model is understood locally as a continuation of

land struggle going back to the Highland Clearances. Following that, I present a review of literature on community land trusts, institutional economics, and some foundational points of commons theory and community economies. Building on these, I incorporate some ontological modes of analysis from science and technology studies along with responses to those ontological modes from feminist and indigenous scholars. This literature provides the foundation for my proposed model of community under which *binding commons* organize community relations and allow for the production of *community infrastructure*.

Chapter 3, which focuses on the methods and methodology of this study, expands upon the theory in Chapter 2 to develop the theoretical groundwork for the methods used in this study. I then detail the methods which I adapt to use in this work, and document the sources of data and types of analysis I use to interpret them. Specifics of data collection and sites may be found in the appendices.

Chapters 4 through 6 represent the results of the empirical analysis detailed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 specifically documents the landscapes of the estates and localities under examination using the modified cultural landscape inventory method. By walking through the elements that may be commonly found in these landscapes, their history, and the dynamics surrounding them currently, I aim to provide the reader with as full a context as possible for understanding the dynamics of community and of trust ownership.

Chapter 5 takes up the question of community as a central concern, building on the questions developed in Chapter 2 regarding what the exact nature of community is, both generally and in the context of rural Scotland. I then develop a model of community which is powerful and nuanced enough to explain outcomes of community ownership. The *binding commons* and its capacity to produce community infrastructure here are detailed

using the cross-sectional case study of the primary local food shops open in each of the focal areas. I focus on the somewhat surprising ways in which the shop mediates, enhances, and expands relationships among residents. This will show how these relationships produce community infrastructure capable of refining and sharing information, assembling labor and resources, and deploying them as community enterprise.

Chapter 6 takes this model of community infrastructure and applies it to a series of specific case studies of the focal trusts, and shows how different levels of community infrastructure and different configurations of it lead to differing outcomes among the trusts under study. This chapter will touch on a number of disparate issues that emerge from community ownership that demonstrate how conundrums in the production of community infrastructure play out at a larger level. As such, I show strong connections between community infrastructure capacity and execution of the kinds of works, enterprises, and projects which characterize the successes and failures of community landlords. The chapter closes with specific assessments of the trusts under examination.

Chapter 7 concludes the study with an essay reflecting on the ontologies of community ownership. I specifically discuss the ways in which different forms of community emerging from Scottish land reform may sit among broader theories of coloniality, modernity, and human relations to the land.

The community buyout movement in Scotland has demonstrated that community as an institution, effectively organized, can step into spaces and thrive where private and state actors may be faltering. This study provides an account of outcomes of community

ownership made legible across trusts as a common phenomenon, but in which local conditions and arrangements mediate the specifics of how local outcomes play out.

The surprises, I hope, become part of the explanation.

Literature review

To formally state the terms of the argument, this study examines the specific form of community ownership in Scotland, produced by the community buyout movement of roughly the last quarter century. It builds on former research which demonstrably shows that community ownership has produced divergent results from private ownership, and has largely achieved broadly shared goals in rural development at a much higher rate than private ownership. However, while as an intervention, community ownership may be widely seen as a success, results have not been uniform in degree or in kind. A growing body of empirical scholarship has interrogated the achievements and problems in Scottish community ownership, but fully integrated models for assessing and explaining the outcomes of the transitions to community ownership remain largely incomplete. This study proposes such a model, based on scholarship from community economies, commons theory, actor-network theory, and feminist and indigenous critical theory.

In this chapter, I first provide a short history of land struggle and land reform efforts in Scotland. I then address prior research into Scottish community ownership and its outcomes, with a particular focus on research that raises questions about the nature of community itself in the context of trust ownership. I then review community economy scholarship and its relationship to commons theory, drawing in particular on ideas of connections between commons and community. In order to develop this model further, I draw on science and technology studies, particularly actor-network theory and responses to

it. This literature will then provide the foundation for the development of the empirical portion of the study.

Land Struggle and Reform in the Scottish Highlands and Islands—A Brief Historical Overview

The Clearances and Their Aftermath

A signature force in establishing mid-20th century land ownership and occupation patterns in the highlands of Scotland remains the Highland Clearances. Popular mythology often understands the Clearances as the result of an English reaction to the Second Jacobite Rebellion which ended in the Battle of Culloden.³ However, there is more general agreement among historians, even those who strongly disagree on the culpability of the landlord class, that while the disruption of social structures of Highland clan life after Culloden may have triggered or accelerated the process, the Clearances were largely the product of economic decisions by landlords to shift land use patterns to sheep farming (see in particular Richards 2008, 41-42; Hunter 2010, 72-74; Wightman 2011, 46-48). The massive displacement of the population of the highland from the 1750's to the 1880's is well documented in these histories and a fuller discussion of it is beyond the scope of this review. The period culminated in a series of land raids, land invasions, and armed resistance to eviction attempts in the 1880's, sometimes referred to as the Crofters Wars. These ultimately

³ For a notable contemporary historical fiction which articulates the myth of the Clearances as the result of English retribution, though by no means the only one, see Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series of books and the television show derived from it.

triggered the passage of the Crofters Holdings Act (Scotland) 1886, which granted the first real security of tenure to crofters (Hunter 2010, 304-308).⁴

The land reforms of the late 19th century ended the Clearances in their classical form, and the creation of a greater measure of security of tenure led to some stabilization of population losses, particularly in the Sutherland estates and in the Western Isles. The twentieth century saw a considerable transition away from the long-standing landholding families and toward land entering the private market (Richards 2008, 416). This continued a trend started in the mid-nineteenth century of the booming popularity of sporting estates, particularly deer hunting, which required large expanses of unpopulated land and very small amounts of labor from the local population to serve as guides (or "ghillies") (Wightman 2011, 163-172). Ownership of these lands began to turn over at a faster rate as landlord families liquidated their land holdings and entered the capital markets. As a result, Scotland's large rural estates became playgrounds for the well-heeled (Richards 2008, 416). With some tenure rights secured but minimal economic development, limited modern infrastructure, and government agricultural policy largely favoring lowland estates, highland and island communities persisted but often with deflated economies.

The Emergence of Scottish Land Reform

In the midst of a 1970's period of activism and scholarship regarding the land, people, and ownership of the Scottish highlands, Liverpool-born playwright John McGrath's

⁴ Briefly, the term "croft" typically refers to a grant of land for farming which is worked but is not sufficient in product and income to sustain a household, thereby requiring some form of outside work. "Crofters" therefore typically hold some rights to farm land, while "cottars" have rights to dwellings but with no land holdings. Further meanings of crofting will be explored in later chapters.

musical satire *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* began touring with McGrath's radical 7:84 Theatre Company. The quirky, angry, elegiac, satirical drama moves from stories of the Highland Clearances through the Crofter's War of the late 19th century, and was a wildly successful hit. Ultimately, the Scottish National Party's invited the company to perform the drama at their annual conference in 1973, where it received a ten minute-long standing ovation at its conclusion (Hunter 2010, 313-314). The play moves in and out of direct addresses to the audience, through historical lessons mixed with fast-paced sketch comedy, ultimately concluding with the full cast delivering a joint soliloquy to the audience which opens, "The people do not own the land. The people do not control the land." (McGrath 2014)

By quoting these lines centrally, this author's introduction joins both James Hunter's concluding paragraph in 1976 (Hunter 2010, 295) and Fiona MacKenzie's introductory paragraphs in 2014 in using them to capture the core impetus for Scottish land reform. The appeal is undeniable—with two quick lines, McGrath has identified a dual disconnect between "the people" and "the land," and centered it around two forms of connection—ownership, an economic relationship, and control, a political relationship. McGrath is not content to leave the explication on its own, however. He further notes, in drawing a connection between the Clearances and the issues of his time, "Then as now, the economy was lagging behind the development of the rest of the economy." Still further, he cites three central forces, both in the time of the Clearances and in conflicts over oil rights in the 1970s: "outside capital," "the local ruling class," and "central government." (McGrath 2014)

In one dramatic address, McGrath has summoned to the stage the basic elements that define the push for land reform. Similarly, the masthead of the *West Highland Free Press* as it

started publication in 1972 declared (in Gaelic) "The Land, The Language, the People." Andy Wightman argues that the particular confluence of current historical works (particularly by Jim Hunter), McGrath's drama, the founding of the *West Highland Free Press* newspaper, and an electoral high point for the Scottish National Party in the 1970's created the groundwork for the new round of land reform that emerged with the creation of the newly devolved Scottish government and Holyrood Parliament in 1999. (Wightman 2011, 230-232)

Contemporary Land Reform and Community Buyouts

By Hunter's own admission (2010, 291), a primary goal of his work and of McGrath's play, which he advised on, was to take seriously the vernacular story of dispossession and lost land told by highlanders of the period. With the contemporaneous emergence of the *West Highland Free Press*, the foundations were laid for land reform which existed not simply as active resistance on the part of estate tenants, but as a national scholastic and intellectual project. However, with the failure of a referendum on devolved government in Scotland and subsequent electoral decline in the 1980's of land reform's chief political champion at the time, the Scottish National Party. Consequently, land reform as a formal political project slipped from the agenda for a decade, although scholarship and activism outside of the primary British political spheres continued.

In 1988, in the midst of the ascendancy of Margaret Thatcher's Tory governments, ownership of the isle of Eigg became the subject of a contentious lawsuit between the divorced co-owners of the island. In 1975, Keith Schellenberg had narrowly outbid a state development authority for the island, one of the four "small isles" of the Inner Hebrides just

south of Skye. Margaret Williams, his former wife and half-owner of the estate, asserted that Schellenberg was devaluing her asset through chronic mismanagement. In 1991, with housing conditions worsening on the island, a group of Scottish land reform activists formed the Isle of Eigg Trust. The trust came into being with the purpose of raising money to purchase the island on behalf of the residents, an effort which the existing Isle of Eigg Residents Association formally endorsed. Schellenberg, denouncing the trust's intentions, ultimately was able to execute a legal maneuver through a holding company to avoid the legally enforced sale. In response, the trust declared itself a "trust in waiting," given that the state of Schellenberg's finances left its leaders with a sense that the question was not fully closed yet. (Dressler 2007)

During this period, in 1992 the Swedish company holding the title to the North Lochinver Estate went bankrupt and the estate was placed on the market. The company had only held the estate for less than four years, having acquired it from the Vestey family, owners of nearly all of Assynt and heirs to a frozen food fortune. Despite the estate consisting entirely of worked crofter holdings, the sale brochure described it as "wilderness" in which "man himself is, perhaps, the alien in this landscape." To facilitate the sale, the holding company planned to subdivide the crofted estate into a series of small parts, a prospect which the estate's crofters feared would doom any chance at coherent management. The local crofter's union, taking inspiration from the Eigg campaign, made the decision to organize a formal trust and attempt to purchase the land on the open market. The following year, the Assynt Crofters Trust, having raised sufficient capital, became the first community trust to purchase outright and hold an estate for its residents (Hunter 2010, 303-305).

Back on Eigg, Schellenberg's vintage Rolls Royce mysteriously erupted in flames one night in January of 1994, for which he blamed the islanders. After a tense period of blame and reprisals, in 1995 Schellenberg quietly sold the island to a mysterious German artist who called himself "Maruma.". Maruma appeared on the island with gnomic sayings about the spirit of the island, and promised enormous projects before promptly disappearing and defaulting on the high yield loans he had apparently taken out to buy the island. By 1997, following a protracted bidding process, a loss of funding from a national trust due to a dispute about organizational structure, and an anonymous gift of £750,000 to the buyout, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust assumed ownership of the island (Fyffe 1997).⁵

The successes of Eigg and Assynt drew enormous media attention in the UK and particularly in Scotland. This not only inspired residents of dozens of other estates to pursue the same path, but also raised the demands of land reform into broader political conversations. On the heels of these actions, a raft of land reform legislation passed the newly convened Scottish Parliament, most notably the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LRSA), but also the Agricultural Holdings Act (Scotland) 2003 and a range of other bills (Wightman 2011, 241). Importantly, the LRA instituted the "community right-to-buy," which effectively created a registration process by which communities in the highlands and islands could register an interest in properties entering the market, thereby acquiring a right of first refusal and a grace period in which to raise money for a community purchase. Further, a separate act in 2001 created the Scottish Land Fund, a pool of money from which to provide grants to fund community purchases. These pieces of legislation put communities in the

⁵ For a further memoir of a member of the leadership of the Eigg purchase, see McIntosh 2001.

position of preferred bidders (albeit after a lengthy bureaucratic process), then provided some limited funds to allow them to complete the purchases.

While estates that have transitioned to community ownership have seen varying results, in places the transformation has been dramatic. On the isle of Gigha, the population had dwindled from over 400 to 98 at the time of the community purchase, but in the eight years following the purchase, it rose again to 151 (Hunter 2010, 309-312). Eigg has seen the opening of new rental cabins for tourists, a restaurant, and a bakery cafe on an island where no lodging or dining establishments had been operating. Further, new wind and hydroelectric projects provide regular electricity on these islands where it had previously been only available from individual diesel generators (Mackenzie 2013, 10-12, 127-129; McMorran *et al.* 2014).

Two more recent actions from governmental bodies have re-started land reform initiatives from the state level. Following the failure of their initiative to win Scotland's independence from the UK in the 2014 referendum, the Scottish National Party's government took up land reform again as a central policy initiative. After commissioning a report from the Land Reform Review Group in 2014, the government issued a public consultation on the draft policy proposals in the document. The legislation subsequently entered debate, ultimately resulting in the passage of the Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2016 in April. The new 2016 Act revised sections of the right to buy provisions to address a number of technical issues with the 2003 act, particularly involving crofts. It further pushed the community right to buy out of only the highlands and applied it to all of Scotland, including urban areas where community buyouts have begun to occur. The act launched

processes to develop new rights to buy for sustainable development and for derelict and abandoned property.

Around 563,000 acres of land are now in community ownership (Community Land Scotland 2021), representing roughly 3% of the total land surface in Scotland. Government expenditures to assist with purchase prices have come almost exclusively through the lottery-funded Scottish Land Fund. As of 2021, the fund is coming to the end of its second five year authorization of £50 million, which followed its first authorization in 2003 of £15 million. The number of community buyouts has become increasingly difficult to tabulate, as the provisions of the two major LRSAs often operate more as a bargaining chip for communities to push to a negotiated sale, rather than the legal vehicle for a final sale. Further, the Scottish government has encouraged governments to engage in direct asset transfers to community groups for properties of community interest. As such, many sales and asset transfers of community halls and local facilities to community groups fall below the radar of national groups, but the number of verified instances of community ownership is at least several hundred. (Community Land Scotland 2021)

Community and Scottish Land Reform—Buyouts and Beyond

As community ownership has grown in Scotland, so too has scholarship evaluating its impacts and successes with the passage of time reveals whether the hopes and dreams of the buyouts can be brought to realization. This section first reviews the literature on how the first 25 years of community ownership has fared in Scotland, then follows that research into a concern for the specifics of the community in these community-owned estates. These

questions around community and its role in the buyout movements will frame the central research foci of this study.

Evaluations of the success of community ownership

Given the broad goals of most of the trusts at their outset and of the land reform movement in general, there is no single metric which stands out as appropriate for evaluating success of trusts. Generally, however, a set of common values recur in the aims stated by leaders, stakeholders, and activists.

First, halting the aging and decline of population in rural northwest Scotland has been a constant focus since the beginning. As MacKenzie *et al.* (2004) emphasize in an early overview of four buyouts, "there is no doubt that the seeds for a culture of resistance in the four case studies were sown during the Clearances." The Clearances do not define the futures of the region and the purpose of land reform is never stated so simply as rewinding them, but ameliorating or reversing their legacy of depopulation remains a consistent focus across the most committed activists and leaders. Second, many trusts and buyout movements explicitly state sustainable development as a goal, including responsible management of wildlife habitats, development of clean energy, and tending grassland ranges and forests. Third, community ownership activists frequently reference an expansion of local economies, employment, and prosperity, as well as opening access to opportunities and resources that may not otherwise be available in these areas.

Overview assessments at the national level, such as the 2014 Land Reform Review Group, widely declare community ownership a success on aggregate across the spectrum of ownership experiences. In their assessment of a decade of land reform since the 2003 LRSA,

the report quoted submissions from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the regional development agency as follows:

Community ownership is delivering positive social, economic and environmental outcomes. It can require significant investment, and huge amounts of voluntary input, but the rewards are shown to be long-lasting and transformational ... Today community asset ownership is no longer viewed as an experimental project but as a proven model of rural regeneration. (HIE, in Hunter *et al.* 2014, p15)

A submission from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organizations to the same report was similarly enthusiastic:

The common factor in the huge majority of these instances of community ownership is that they have been resounding successes. The communities involved have been energised and activated by the experience of ownership, and have proved themselves to be capable of managing their land and land-based assets with confidence, creativity and initiative. Certainly, we have heard of none who would ever consider selling back into private ownership. (SCVO, in Hunter *et al.* 2014, p15-16)

There is growing evidence that hopes for repopulation and demographic renewal are being realized. According to a 2020 survey commissioned by Community Land Scotland, an organization founded to advocate for the interests of the new community land owners, residents of community owned trusts widely reported an increase in young families with children staying or moving into the area since the buyout. (*West Highland Free Press* 2020) In many cases, such as on the North Harris estate (Mackenzie 2013) or on Gigha (Satsangi 2007), these repopulation efforts are supported by collaboration with the Scottish government to build social affordable housing on trust land.

Anecdotal stories of "firsts" show community ownership's success at producing green energy. Eigg produced the first island-wide grid powered almost entirely by renewable energy (Dressler 2007). Gigha broke ground with the first community-owned wind farm connected to the national grid, the first of many community owned energy projects to take

hold in Scotland, many on community-held estates. (For a broader discussion see Haggett and Aitken 2015.) Warren and McFadyen (2010) report survey data which shows a strong increase in support for local wind farms if they are community owned.

Further, community estates demonstrate considerable agility in adapting to new conditions. Sarah Skerratt's (2013) review of 17 community trusts in Scotland shows support for a kind of resilience, but one which differs from the common conception of resilience as the ability of a community to "bounce back" from a disturbance. Skerratt instead interprets resilience as the capacity to make changes proactively in anticipation of coming trends. She finds in her review of trust plans and leadership that trust decision making structures were actively seeking multi-scalar connections for their steps, attempting to move from volunteer labor to paid labor, searching for new revenue streams, and reaching beyond narrow groups of activists to incorporate the broader community (Skerratt 2013, 41-45).

While these assessments largely document these successes in attaining these primary goals, a number of concerns continue to emerge. In an overview of five trusts, Callaghan *et al.* (2011) documented a mix of positives and negatives. The positives found included increased social capital, renewable energy and reforestation, and local enterprise, whereas the negatives included ongoing conflict over trust decisions and volunteer burnout. Further, many residents expressed concern over excessive dependence on external grant funders and state actors, as well as frustration those same parties for their inflexibility. Other studies that examined local conflicts found disparities between who is empowered in the community, noting that in many cases trust ownership was not true "local empowerment," but empowerment of selected local actors (*e.g.*, Mackinnon 2002, Creamer *et al.* 2019). Skerratt and Hall (2011) noted that in many cases community ownership placed heavy demands on

volunteer labor to administer, manage, and maintain community assets. Perhaps the most succinct overall treatment was provided by Warren and McKee (2011) who noted that despite the hopes of some and the fears of others, Scottish land reform did not merit the title of a "revolution." Rather, it had introduced new dynamics which substantially shifted the legal balance of power away from land owners and towards residents.

This research has addressed the question of whether a transition to community ownership has led to strong, diverse, positive results as a general rule. On the basis of the results presented here, study considers that question to be closed; community ownership has a strong effect across multiple spheres of activity in line with broadly held goals of state and local actors.

Community as a concern in community ownership

Community ownership, then, is a powerful and valuable intervention, but what makes it operate? Well beyond the almost tautological nature of the statement, subsequent research has consistently found that *community* itself emerges as a particularly important concern for community ownership in Scotland. As Mackinnon (2002) argues, "notions of community are central to the land reform agenda which has emerged in Scotland." Mackinnon documents how community ownership emerged out of series of policy concerns around community empowerment, which raises the question, whom is this empowering? In this section I detail how scholarship around community ownership has wrestled with the concept of community itself, and how it changes and is changed by community ownership. As shown here, the specifics and structures of community and how they are expressed through ownership are both strong influences on the trajectories of community land ownership as

well as subjects of transformation from the processes and technologies of owning and working the land. To put it more simply, the form of community impacts the outcomes of ownership, while at the same time community ownership re-shapes of community.

Mackinnon characterizes the then-nascent community ownership movement, along with federated Highlands and Islands development boards, as an instance of "governing through community." These boards and trusts hence produce not a generalized local empowerment, but rather a system in which interests of the state and the empowered locals operate at a level of interdependence. Together, these form kinds of "government technologies" which, in turn, empower a specific, limited set of local actors (Mackinnon 2002, 314-317).

As the community buyout movement has aged, this concern has become more acute. In an area where there are persistent divides between "incomers" and "natives," many trusts have struggled to recruit directors with multi-generational family ties locally. Creamer *et al.* (2019) detail the concern of "local" sustainability initiatives on a community trust that had come to be led almost entirely by "incomers." In many places in the Highlands, the term "white settler" is used to describe an incomer who stays aloof, makes no attempt to learn local customs, and seems intent on changing local culture and traditions. Projects that are perceived to be pushed heavily by incomers are then met with resentment by more locally tied people. (Creamer *et al.* 2019) Conversely, McMorran documented frustration by those pursuing sustainability goals, noting a "perception by some interviewees that their local communities lacked entrepreneurial spirit or commercial drive." (McMorran *et al.* 2014, 26)

A similar divide emerged in a trust studied by van Veelen and Haggett (2017) who studied place attachment as a driver of involvement in the community. In responding to literature that frames place attachment, particularly positive place attachment, as a kind of

all-unifying social force, van Veelen and Haggett find that different kinds of place attachment, even attachment to the same place, may engender disagreement. In response to a potential wind farm development, interviewees expressed strong attachment to local places in ways which produced both support for the wind farm development and opposition to it. As such, these strong attachments became not a unifying prospect in the community, but a dividing one. Notably, opponents of the wind farm development, largely incomers, spoke of defending the *landscape*, while supporters, predominantly long-term residents, cited the importance of the *land* and *place*, a differentiator I will return to in Chapter 4 (van Veelen and Haggett, 2017).

These kinds of division do not diminish the importance of community, or even negate the arguments above for the successes of community land ownership. Rather, it highlights the criticality of specifics of what community is, who and what it includes, and the internal dynamics that govern who represents community. In this vein, based on the Scottish experiment, Bryden and Geisler (2007) make the argument for including community in a broader international land reform agenda, but note "the task of finding community—let alone bringing it back into land reform—is fraught with definitional and operational problems." For them, as for Mackinnon, community is both too potentially beneficial and too powerful to continue to ignore.

Further, Mackinnon argues that these kinds of government technologies that operate governance through the medium of community do not just employ community as a vehicle, but also actively restructure community through this action. The action members of the community take in service of community goods (e.g. Hoffman 2013) will change residents' relations with each other along with how they perceive their spaces.

Fiona Mackenzie addresses these transformations, drawing heavily on the conceptual framework of diverse community economies outlined by J. K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006).⁶ Mackenzie specifically builds upon Gibson-Graham's emphasis on the interruptive practice of community as a disruptive act on existing policies and institutions.

The labour of building rights of ownership and use of the land are constituent of the labour of becoming, of an ethics of the local bound up in the notion of community. (Mackenzie 2004)

Mackenzie continues to emphasize the collective identities produced by collective "re-imagining," drawing also upon Michel Foucault and Judith Butler's conceptions of the self. Her 2013 book, *Places of Possibility*, goes further into the collective imaginings, highlighting the "community subjectivities" produced by the commoning of land and the active, daily production of community (Mackenzie 2013, 219-222). Under this framework, the "common claim" on land exerted by the community land ownership structures interrupts dominant neoliberal economic practices and creates a space for more possible economies. Critically, in addition to the opportunities for economic growth and an end to stagnation and out-migration, this process opens greater possibilities for a kind of environmental sustainability developed as part of a continuous assemblage along with the commoning of land and community. Just as importantly, this "re-working" transformed the community's understanding of its land, property, and wind from a kind of "wild, empty" place to a "worked" place, moving from an individually passive stance to a collectively active and engaged one. (Mackenzie 2013)

⁶ J. K. Gibson-Graham is the joint pen name for feminist geographers Katherine Gibson and the late Julie Graham. The two published together under the single pen name for over a decade; this paper follows the generally accepted convention of treating the pen name with the singular "they."

As for the the conflicts generated by disputes over land use within community ownership, McMorran and Scott note that conflict management remains a critical task of community development work, and hence becomes a central duty of trust leadership after buyouts (McMorran and Scott 2013, 167-168). In their view, the conflict over sustainability goals is not altogether a negative outcome, but a process which can invigorate a program of sustainability, both bringing new voices into the process as well as better informing the broader sustainability discourse.

Theorizing "community" in land reform and development

Community, therefore, is a matter of significant concern in the experiences, successes, and problems of Scottish land reform. This emphasis on community governance opens the question of what community actually is, as well as who is included in community and who is not. In order to address these, I turn to how the concept of community itself has been theorized in scholarship from planning, geography, and anthropology in particular.

In the introduction to their edited volume, *Community Action and Planning: Contexts, drivers and outcomes*, Nick Gallent and Daniela Ciaffi assert that the volume exists in part to pose the question of what is community. While the definition remains without a narrow articulation across the volume, they note that critically their texts prefer "seeing it instead as a product of *active* exchange across social networks." (Gallent and Ciaffi 2014, 5, emphasis theirs) They invoke the work of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies as foundational. Tönnies identified "unity of will" as the binding element of community as well as much more recent sociological work which emphasized "stable culture" and the turning of otherwise sundry individuals to "potential purpose." Notably, however, the authors

emphasize that many of these definitions of community focus solely on commonalities between parties and anticipate groups which are always in agreement or are homogeneous. They contrast this with the empirical experience of community, which they note often involves highly heterogeneous populations and conflict in outlook and decision making (Gallent and Ciaffi 2014, 7). Ultimately the authors focus on two core aspects out of a broader overview—that communities "comprise networks of social transaction" and that they are "built on a common identity (notwithstanding internal fractures) which can rapidly become a shared purpose." (Gallent and Ciaffi 2014, 9)

In a similar discussion from the same volume, referring to the community buyout on the isle of Gigha, Satsangi highlights Cohen's work (1985, cited in Satsangi 2014) that community does not exist around structures, but rather around "systems of values, norms, and moral codes that provide a sense of identity. As such, community is symbolically constructed." (Satsangi 2014, 118) Likewise, Suzanne Morse (Moomaw) asserts that community is bound around three nexuses: relationships, interests, and place, and further defines them as "places where individuals live, connect, work, and are responsible to one another." (Morse 2004, 6)

While these works address the definition of community and often valorize the concept as a center for development work, the experience of community from Scottish trusts clearly demonstrates a more complex, fraught, and dynamic processes underlying community, demanding a more critical eye. Yvonne Rydin's vernacular analysis highlights three important characteristics of the word in community planning discourses. Community planners, she finds, too often characterize community in three simplistic ways: as normatively good; as strongly identified with locality; and operating as a unitary. Rydin's

intervention to address these shortcomings specifically focuses on community as a system of overlapping networks which can be further understood by mapping connections via social capital, with specific emphasis on bonding, binding, and linking forms of social capital.

(Rydin 2013, p22-25)

Community and commons

Similarly, community remains a central concept in the theoretical of community economies and diverse economies building on the work of J. K. Gibson-Graham and their adaptation of Stephen Gudeman's anthropological work on economies. In developing theoretical foundations for my own proposed model of community, I will rely heavily on Gudeman's emphasis on the criticality of commons in community and economy and Gibson-Graham's articulation of a community as a space for decision making.

Community economies, for Gibson-Graham, represent both a conceptual intervention that disrupts the "cold negotiations" of the market, as well as a means of understanding economic activity that is already continually happening outside of the spheres and vision of market economics. As they put it,

In our view, a discourse of the community economy could act to create and sustain the identity of a postcapitalist economy constructed around a knot of definite meanings associated with economic being-in-common. What stands in the way of advancing this strategic language politics is . . . the difficulty of thinking the commerce of being-together . . . (Gibson-Graham 2006, 84)

However, as Rydin above, they find contemporary vernacular ways in which the word "community" is deployed to be fraught with a kind of "fuzzy warmth," promised as a general panacea for all ills but never fully defined. They oppose a conception of community economic development around a "specified set of qualities, forms, and functionings," which

they wish to undermine with one of "an ethical space of decision" (Gibson-Graham 2006, 86), which promotes an ethical praxis of necessity, surplus, consumption, and commons (Gibson-Graham 2006, 85-88).

Commons, in particular, play a particularly strong role Gibson-Graham's articulation of community, much of which they integrate from Stephen Gudeman's work on economic anthropology. Gudeman emphasizes on commons as the *sine qua non* of community—as he puts it, "Without a commons, there is no community; without a community, there is no commons." (Gudeman 2001, 27)

Gudeman models the broader economy as heterogenous mix of two institutional processes, with community economy serving as the economic base and market economy serving to surround and link disparate community economies. He is expansive in his definition of "commons," asserting that "the commons is the material thing or knowledge a people have in common, what they share, so that what happens to a commons is not a physical incident but a social event." (Gudeman 2001, 27) Building upon Gudeman's framework, Gibson-Graham identify community as the *process of becoming* that continues to produce the common property regime (Gibson-Graham 2006, 34-38). In their examinations of informal and non-formal modes of economic activity, along with their work to further develop them, they highlight a "logic of care" that runs counter to the logics of exchange or accumulation (Gibson-Graham 2006, 160-161). In this they highlight acts of labor such as care of "others," often performed by women or racialized people along familial or communal ties. Through case studies such as on a post-industrial coal-producing valley in Australia, they surface how care and other forms of feminized labor both represents

substantial, critical economic activity at the same time as it is rhetorically devalued in importance.

As discussed above, Gibson-Graham's community economies already play a central role in Mackenzie's work in Scotland, in which she and collaborators make a similar claim regarding both common assets and becoming, asserting that in the community buyouts of private land which are in turn held in common, "the boundaries of community are re-worked in the new political spaces created through collective claiming of land undercrofting tenure." (Mackenzie *et al.* 2004, 176) Again, in Mackenzie's account of the North Harris Estate, community dynamics simultaneously work to shape the outcomes of various projects and interventions, and at the same time are shaped by the exertion of the labor of re-working the land, wind, and built environment of the estate. (Mackenzie 2013) In particular, the object of this re-working of wind and wind energy is the production of a new energy commons. The "wild" phenomenon of the wind is re-worked into a being-in-common through community management via this energy commons. The commons thereby joins the wind with the human population, opening new possibilities for the land and the people (Mackenzie 2010).

This tight bond between commons and community serves as the first primary ontological foundation for the model I deploy in assessing Scottish community ownership. It provides an organizing nexus for assembling social, economic, political, and material concerns as an integrated set of actors and processes, thereby meeting the breadth and scale requirements of explaining the successes of community trusts.

Science and Technology Studies and the Logic of Care

The remainder of this literature review builds upon this foundation to fill out the model. First, following Gudeman, I will review a sample of the rapidly expanding scholarship of the commons. Second, I will expand Gibson-Graham's articulation of community as a space of ethical decision making into a space for transmission of information and production of facts, drawing on literature from science and technology studies and the situation and use of local knowledge.

Commons theory—upending the tragedy

Gudeman leans heavily on the presence of the commons in order to center his conception of community. As these articulations of community are to form the base of a conceptual model for this study, the specific dynamics of common property regimes will shape the model in important ways. I here give a brief selection of some foundational works on the commons, as well as more recent studies on commons and commoning.

Commons theory in the late 20th century and early 21st century can roughly be said to be an ongoing response to Garrett Hardin's argument in his 1968 article, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in which he made his now familiar assertion that the tendency of those with access to a common resource to maximize their utilization would lead to the collapse of the resource. The prominence of its place in *Science* and its succinct and pithy title have made it the reference point for arguments that doom common-pool resources and common land holdings—indeed all forms of resource management schemes outside of government control or private ownership—not only to failure but to environmental destruction.

The foremost response to Hardin comes from economist Elinor Ostrom, who challenges this consensus in *Governing the Commons*, asking if common property regimes are doomed to failure, why can we find so many of them all over the globe, some of them over a thousand years old and going strong? She notes that the policy prescriptions point generally to one of two outcomes as being the “only” solution to the problem – either the enclosure of all common property into private property, or the assumption of management of the resource by the state. Individuals, because of their own limitations of rational maximization, are otherwise doomed to Pareto-inferior outcomes and “tragedy.” Ostrom, with characteristic diplomatic, understated bite, goes on to say, “Instead of basing policy on the presumption that the individuals involved are helpless, I wish to learn more from the experience of individuals in field settings.” (Ostrom 1990, 14)

Ostrom lays out seven design principles that successful, long-lasting common pool resource (CPR) institutions appear to follow:

1. Clearly defined boundaries
2. Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions
3. Collective-choice agreements
4. Monitoring
5. Graduated sanctions
6. Conflict-resolution mechanisms
7. Minimal recognition of rights to organize (by external authority) (Ostrom 1990, p90)

Ostrom also, importantly, divides problems of community decision making into multiple levels of analysis in terms of conflict resolution and institutional choice. At the highest level are constitutional questions of how the institution is assembled and its fundamental roles.

Below that are collective choice problems, which deal with the setting of institutional policy. Finally there are operational questions, which concern the day-to-day decisions which affect the institution (Ostrom 1990, 53).

In contemporaneous work to Ostrom, Ronald Oakerson defined the commons as "a natural resource (or a durable facility of human design and construction) that is shared by a community of producers or consumers" (Oakerson 1992, 41). His framework for commons analysis starts with an examination of the relationship between decision-making arrangements of the commons and the physical and technical aspects. Among such arrangements, Oakerson highlights jointness, which he emphasizes prevents *lawful* overlapping and subtractability between users; exclusion, including both the capacity to exclude and the conditions of exclusion; and indivisibility, or the risk of subdivision of the commons. In decision-making arrangements, Oakerson highlights operational rules, conditions of collective choice, and external arrangements. Oakerson's analysis then examines the patterns of interaction between these, and the outcomes that those interactions produce (Oakerson 1992, 43-51).

Oakerson's best articulation of the framework comes in the chapter cited here, but in that work Oakerson notes prior use of the framework. Perhaps most notably, the framework was used heavily by Blaikie and Brookfield in *Land Degradation and Society* (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987), widely regarded as the founding work of the field of political ecology. Notably, political ecologists have begun to re-engage with commons and the practice of commoning, echoing many of the dynamics introduced by Oakerson. In his review of commoning literature within political ecology, Matthew Turner (2016) emphasizes that "pure" common property regimes are relatively rare, but that hybrid commoning systems

with overlapping systems of rights are far more common. Political ecologists increasingly articulate commons dynamics through the verb "to common" to make room for these hybrid systems and other spaces where the relevant processes may not fit the strict definition of pure common property regimes (Turner 2016, 800).

Similarly, Ostrom's focus on the necessity of congruence with local conditions remains salient. Ellen Bassett's work on the creation of a land trust in the Tanzania-Bondeni settlement in Voi, Kenya demonstrates the importance of alignment of trust structures with local tenure customs and institutions. In an attempt to replicate the American model of community land trusts for purposes of slum upgrading, a community-driven decision making process led to formal en-commoning of the land in the settlement under trust ownership. Because of the specifics of Kenyan property law, this required a split organizational model with the most directly community-based organization incorporated as a "society," which in turn created a separate land-holding trust. This arrangement made the organization unwieldy and confusing to residents (Bassett 2005, 390). In addition to the frustration which emerged from these complications as well as general hostility towards community ownership from state institutions in Kenya, residents reported further difficulties in obtaining planning permission for housing construction and allocation of land, often demonstrating how the ways in which the trust attempted to assign tenure ran afoul of local customs. (Bassett 2007, 12-13) Despite this, residents broadly recommended other communities follow the community trust model, emphasizing that it provided better economic and tenure security. Notably, residents pointed to the necessity of unity, co-operation, and mutual care among themselves as critical determinants of success. (Bassett 2007, 17) Hoffman notes this same requirement in Scottish community trusts, noting that

they were implemented in ways which were congruent with the unique crofting tenures as well as the external support given by the newly devolved Scottish government (Hoffman 2013, 295).

Finally, both Ostrom and Oakerson's frameworks emphasized that common property regimes necessarily included forms of exclusion as well as inclusion. Nightingale (2019) returns to this foundation alongside analyses drawn from Gibson-Graham to again emphasize commons as an action of performance and becoming, rather than a fixed instance. In an examination of community forestries in Nepal, she finds that the terms of the commons require continual re-negotiation in order to retain its existence as a commons.

While Hardin's "tragedy" continues to persist in common discourses, despite the most empirical and robust dismantlings of it (Brinkley 2020 is notably thorough), research work on commoning continues to proliferate. Read as an ongoing, active process couched in relational terms applicable in hybrid situations, revisions of Ostrom's design principles and Oakerson's framework can now be applied to the dynamics of communities that, in Gudeman's terms, encompass commons:

- ◆ The community-commons dynamics must produce some degree of inclusivity and exclusivity.
- ◆ Institutional arrangements must be established in ways which are congruent with local conditions
- ◆ They must have mechanisms for dispute resolution
- ◆ Collective choice arrangements must allow for effective decision making
- ◆ Commons arrangements must be made in parallel with external arrangements of authorization, exchange, and information sharing

By Gudeman's terms, as these dynamics are expressed in commons arrangements, so too will they be expressed in the community economies which surround them. These principles can thereby be expected to appear in communities negotiating their relationships with common properties.

State development actions and governing via community

As developed thus far, community and commons are relational processes, co-produced through the process of commoning, the re-working of community. The arrangements to produce and maintain these systems and relations can be at least partially characterized using commons theory. I here note, however, that the relations between community and commons so far articulated are declarative and correlative, by which I mean that Gudeman's declaration of a relationship between commons and community is based on observation, but not explained by a mechanism. Further, while the link articulated thus far between community and common property is sufficient at the narrow scale to explain institutional arrangements, to this author's eye it does not provide the capacity for the kinds of substantive, reliable changes in outcomes that community ownership has demonstrated.

To return briefly to the literature on Scottish trusts, an early assessment from economist Douglas Macmillan described land reform as a response to both a market failure in the land market and of government failure, in the case of state-owned estates suffering from similar neglect (Macmillan 2000). Relatedly, work by Annie McKee examined attitudes and frustrations on rural estates across a range of ownership groups, including multiple privately owned estates. Her work uncovered both frustration at landowners "stifling" economic opportunity and community spirit, along with what residents often perceive as

unhealthy dependency on a few large employers (McKee 2013, 115). Along with other work detailed above, community ownership appears to open possibilities from otherwise stultifying influences of disengaged landlords or distant bureaucracy. By contrast, given that government actions such as the establishment of the Scottish Land Fund and the provisions of the land reform acts, community ownership is at least in part a government development initiative which appears to have circumvented some of these frustrations. To return to Mackinnon (2002), "governance by community," while inconsistent in its empowerment of locals, represents a "governance technology" that can be deployed by the state to achieve state goals in concert with local action.

James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State* is concerned with these particular state actions such as development initiatives or land management that run aground on technical problems. In Scott's articulation, the knowledge available to the state, or what is visible from the state's "viewpoint," is both insufficient and of the wrong sort to overcome the conundrums of local conditions. Because of this, projects at best fail to reach their potential, and at worse deteriorate the situation they attempt to improve. This problem plagues even projects which engaged rationally and with the best available state-level information and theory. Scott points to a contrast with operators with local knowledge, who have experience and skill working with local conditions and are therefore able to overcome the difficulties which foil projects lacking that knowledge. He deploys a handful of Greek terms for knowledge to articulate three tiers of functional knowledge: First, *episteme* is the kind of formalized, abstract information which remote state actors (and to a degree, disengaged landlords) use to execute projects. Second, *techne* is organized, pragmatic knowledge which applies across situations and which can be trained at the general level. Finally, *metis* is the kind of

knowledge gained by one who is "in the mix of things," as the Greek word implies (Scott 1998).

As Kumar notes in his review, Scott's knowledge typology has been widely received and employed but also particularized. *Metis* may be understood both as practical local knowledge, but also involve a kind of cunning, or in Scots vernacular, graft, while yet another Aristotelian word for knowledge, *phronesis*, may imply more of a knowledge of practical ethical action. Additionally, Kumar notes both the power and the difficulty in moving between *metis* and *techne*, where *techne* is stable and open to standardization, whereas *metis* is constantly changing and adapting to local conditions. Improvisation, therefore, requires both functional *techne* with a recognition of the necessity of *metis* (Kumar 2019).

Scott's knowledge typology nevertheless provides a clear articulation of the power of local knowledge and the importance of that local knowledge interacting with discourses at higher levels. To address how these happen, I turn to the considerable body of theory generated from science and technology studies.

Actor-network theory and boundary objects

Science and technology studies (STS)⁷ came together in the 1980s from a range of different disciplines that had undertaken various methods for studying how science operated in a social context and how technologies were created and adopted. The specific methods, theories, and particularly ontologies developed by STS emerged as a response to

⁷ STS has alternately been named "science, technology, and society." Both are widely used and refer to the same body of scholarship.

the challenge of explaining how science could both be a product of social forces and also be responsive to the empirically observed world, as well as explaining how economics and politics impacted technological development alongside the material benefits, changes, and risks of technologies. The solutions to these sticky issues developed by STS have subsequently been adopted widely by other fields.

Specifically, actor-network theory (ANT), the methodology and ontology developed by Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, has been widely deployed by scholars in a range of fields, including geography and planning. In developing an analytical structure for examining community, the ANT methodology makes several helpful assertions. First, ANT insists on treating the humans and non-humans in a system symmetrically; ANT's proponents such as Latour include it in the category of social constructivism, but include non-human actors on the same level as humans when examining social constructions. Second, ANT insists on focusing on moments of strain, controversy, or dislocation within networks, at which point the latent forces which bind groups of actors together become visible. Finally, ANT insists on viewing these connections from a specific, limited vantage point, which Latour terms an *oligopticon* (in contrast to Bentham and Foucault's "panopticon") (Latour 2005) to avoid the epistemological sleight-of-hand movement which Donna Haraway calls the "god trick," of presuming to view the interactions from "nowhere" and thereby claiming a kind of superior objectivity (Haraway 1988, 581).

These ephemeral, formative connections between agents that ANT seeks to identify and their role in the constant reconstitution of groups and larger assemblages speaks directly to much of the scholarship on community discussed here. In emphasizing these connections, Latour explicitly warns against overly eager aggregation and generalization across all of

these members, noting that within the temporality and imperfections of these connections lie the forces that shape the ultimate form of the assemblages and, further, help determine the connections between non-proximal agents. Those connections, he argues, only "light up" when work is being done along these channels, and are therefore not always visible. Further, Latour emphasizes the agency of each actor sitting as a node in the chains, thereby becoming a mediator of the relationships between its connected nodes. As such, social assemblages are fully hybridized meshes of humans and non-humans, with each side of the human/non-human divide mediating relationships with the other (Latour 2005).

The assertion that non-human actors can have agency—including not just living organisms but also technological artifacts, molecules, buildings, and bodies of water—probably remains one of the more counter-intuitive aspects of ANT. To a degree, this is why Callon, when he first developed the term "actor-network," insisted that neither the actors nor their networked linkages come "first," but co-produce each others existence. Hence, the agency which non-human actors exert comes within confined networks.

Among the primary ways that non-human actors may exercise agency is by assembling other human and non-human actors along specific, discrete linkages. In so doing, actors may play influential roles in producing complex relationships by performing different roles or assuming flexible interpretations. The specific act by which an actor interposes itself in the midst of other actors and thereby mediates new connections between them for purposes of overcoming an obstacle is what Latour and Callon refer to as *interessement*. Star and Griesemer (1989) developed "boundary objects" as mediators of *interessement* while examining Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and the museum's interaction with amateur specimen collectors across the American west. Their work documents two highly

disjunct sets of interpretations emerge around the specimens between when they circulated among the collectors and when they entered the museum, and sometimes when they circulated back out again. In their construction:

Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual-site use. These objects may be abstract or concrete. They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation. The creation and management of boundary objects is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds. (Star and Griesemer 1989, 393)

As such, boundary objects are actors that help to bridge social groupings and allow for cooperation between groups even when consensus about action is not reached. In later developments of the concept, Star argued the work that boundary objects facilitate can be thought of as *infrastructure* that facilitates the exchange of knowledge and work (Star 1999). The boundary object concept, while not strictly within the terms of ANT in its original construction, has proven one of the more fertile concepts for further work (Star 2010; Leino 2012).

STS beyond ANT: opening space for an expanded chorus of voices

These forms of critique from STS have been embraced by a wide range of scholars, including by indigenous, feminist, and postcolonial scholars. Importantly, while these scholars have found STS's theoretical schools like ANT useful in opening rhetorical spaces for more voices, they have continued to push back against its founding scholars such as Latour, showing that the seminal frameworks of ANT still leave theoretical blind spots. In

this section I detail how these responses propose new and better forms of the STS methods and ontologies, and how they inform this study.

A central move in Latour's early career was to return from doing ethnography in Africa and apply those similar ethnographic techniques to the Jonas Salk institute. His experience in doing this, and the negative reaction this generated from scientists and defenders of science as an institution, led him to write his most well known theoretical work, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Latour argues that Western science had been divided strictly into the study of the human and the non-human as part of a "modernist constitution," in which Western "moderns" (Latour's titular "we") had split the human and non-human successfully, while the "non-moderns" outside the West remained trapped in a world where the human and the non-human intermingled. Latour argues that the West never actually achieved this state, and that the separation of the human and the non-human is only superficial, and that in any "modern" institution the two are hybridized again repeatedly in dense actor-networks of humans and non-humans. This conceit of having achieved a state of "modernity" thereby becomes an implicit argument for Western supremacy, including of its greatest epistemological achievement, its science. Latour emphatically does not argue that Western science and scholarship is invalid, only that it is, like every other epistemological regime on the planet, situated in its own social and material entanglements (Latour 1993).

This implicit rebuke of a supposed inherent supremacy of Western science without denouncing its validity and usefulness has made ANT a powerful tool for those wanting to argue for the place of feminist, indigenous, and post-colonial voices in academic and policy

discourses. However, as Métis⁸ philosopher and anthropologist Zoe Todd tells, figures such as Latour himself can often be deaf to these voices, which can lead to trouble if these seminal figures are overly centered. Todd opens her paper with her story, as a graduate student, of excitedly going to hear, in her words, the "Great Latour" speak about a means of relating to the climate which indigenous scholars had extensively written on. Disappointingly for Todd, Latour neglected to mention any indigenous scholars, an anecdote which she uses as a point of departure for a disappointment and frustration with the broader academy:

What I am critiquing here then, really, are the silences. It is not that current trends in the discipline of anthropology or the Euro-academy more broadly are *wrong*. It is that they do not currently live up to the promises they make. . . . When we cite European thinkers who discuss the 'more-than-human' but do not discuss their Indigenous contemporaries who are writing on the exact same topics, we perpetuate the white supremacy of the academy. (Todd 2016, p17-18)

Per, Littletree *et al.* (2020), indigenous knowledge production is explicitly relational. Knowledge emerges from the relationality of humans and non-humans, which is then mediated by "peopleness" and indigenous ways of knowing. From there it enters institutions such as libraries and museums where it contends with forms of state discipline of knowledge. The authors visualize this as knowledge moving out from the center of an expanding set of concentric rings, with forms of translation and mediation happening at each move, through both formal and informal processes (see also TallBear 2015).

These critiques highlight two important factors. First, we need to cite and include these voices into our scholarship. However, they also highlight the importance of paying attention

⁸ "Métis" here refers to the common name of the North American indigenous tribe, as opposed to *metis*, the Greek form of knowledge used by James C. Scott. The two have a common etymology. To avoid confusion I will follow the convention of italicizing the Greek term for knowledge but not the tribe.

to silences and absences when we study spaces where knowledge and facts are being produced.

A similar critique to Todd's has come from feminist geographers responding to the narrow ways in which ANT insists on strictly following links out of the oligopticon. Latour's methodological move from "matters of fact" to "matters of concern" (Latour 2005), Maria Puig de la Bellacasa sees merit in Latour's approach and his emphasis on re-discovering the political power of affect inside a cold world of technoscience, but pushes for the change in emphasis to go even further. In short, where Latour calls for a move from the static and mechanistic emphasis on matters of fact to a more dynamic and social focus on matters of concern, Puig de la Bellacasa notes that depending on *whose* concerns are articulated, other voices and concerns may be left out of the narrative. To redress this, Puig de la Bellacasa calls for an augmentation of Latour's "matters of concern" with "matters of care." Care, Puig de la Bellacasa argues, should not be studied as a passive state of mind, but rather as an active process involving labor, often unpaid, invisible, or erased. In contrast to Latour's *thingpolitics* which demand sympathy for the conditions which produce dominant if harmful technological objects and affects, even those that are destructive, an affective politics of care focuses on things which are neglected, either in lack of active care or in lack of attention to that work of care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011).

In the specific space of the built environment, Shannon Mattern (2018) highlights a turn in academic interest towards maintenance and care of constructed spaces and places. Maintenance, Mattern argues, has too often taken a back seat to more currently celebrated processes such as creation, construction, innovation, and the production of the new. In her sweeping article which surveys topics from the "right to repair" movement to houses

celebrated for their innovative and modernist design that are nonetheless extremely difficult to clean, Mattern emphasizes the same topics of affect, invisible or ignored labor, and an ethos of care.

Concomitant with Puig de la Bellacasa's emphasis on the science of neglected things, Gibson-Graham emphasize the forms of economic activity which have never gone away and which form, metaphorically, the hidden part of the economic iceberg, while the formal part above the water receives the attention and study. Central to these diverse forms of economic activity is the economics of care, including care between people and the care for spaces, again with labor and enterprise often performed by people on the margins of hegemonic economic systems. Also like Puig de la Bellcasa, Gibson-Graham's program is more prospective than critical, and looks to develop, accentuate, and expand those community economies which facilitate care. (Gibson-Graham 1996, 2006) In the phrasing of Gibson-Graham, when the focus turns to the material and specific aspects of informal and under-recognized economic activity supporting formal economic processes, they drop out and "land on the ground," or become visible in spatially and materially explicit elements and practices. Through this now-spatialized aspect of these economic activities and attempts to expand and support them, actions of maintenance and care, which might otherwise be silent or absent, may be seen with careful examination of material spaces, landscapes, and processes. This becomes particularly important in the development of the methods in this study.

In this next section, I apply these theoretical and ontological lessons from STS as the last major theoretical foundation for a model of community which is robust enough to explain these strong effects.

Applying STS to community theory

In the context of his critique of Western, modernist science, Latour explicitly aims not to denounce science, but to move it from the position of being the singular source of authority for *ultimate* knowledge to being merely an extremely powerful source for *useable* knowledge. Placed in conversation with Scott's typology of knowledge, STS theory traces how concepts, ideas, decisions, facts, and other forms of knowledge move between these typologies.

I push Gibson-Graham's argument for community as a site of ethical decision making further, articulating it also a site for the production of knowledge, much in the way that Latour interprets laboratories and other sites of inquiry as spaces of "calculation" and fact production. Likewise, Michel Callon's classic paper on St. Brieuc Bay shows the work of knowledge and fact production to be an act of *translating* interests of the previously unheard actors into spaces where scientific knowledge is produced and validated as fact. In Callon's paper, these interests are those of both the fishermen (to have a sustainable harvest) and the scallops (to not be overfished) as well as those of the scientists (to publish). As Callon shows, attempts to speak these interests into the spaces of knowledge are not always successful, and can leave facts unresolved and uncertain, but a close analysis of how the spaces, materials, and actors are assembled in this effort reveals the more-than-human social processes that lead to the success or failure of that effort.

If community is the site of local knowledge production, then we can also see it as a space where Scott's *metis* and *techne* contest with each other, as Kumar (2019) articulates. As such, just as Star's boundary objects produce infrastructure for knowledge and work, I will

propose *binding commons*⁹ as a related concept. Rather than existing on the margins of two (or more) groups, binding commons provide the anchoring relationships defining the interior of a particular kind of group. Placed as the commons at the center of Gudeman's conception of community, binding commons, like Star's boundary object, produce a kind of infrastructure for knowledge and work for that community. Importantly, by situating the binding commons within an ANT ontology, this framework grants the binding commons its own power and agency to shape, transform, facilitate, and mediate the actions in the community around it, which may now be seen as a particular form of an actor-network. Those allowed to act as appropriators¹⁰ of the common pool resource are assembled by the resource itself; those who are not approved appropriators may visit, view, interact with, or otherwise use the resource but are systematically excluded from the same group as those approved. Hence, by tracing the dynamics of inclusion, exclusion, and governance of the commons, we now can delineate with much more precision the definition, bounding, and ongoing reproduction of a given community.

In ANT terminology, community becomes the space of calculation and mediation for local knowledge for spaces and actors where it achieves *interessement* (or interposition) in the space between local actors. The greater the degree to which community achieves *interessement*, the more it will be the site of translation between actors. It is in this space that we can finally theorize where, precisely, *community ownership* changes outcomes. The

⁹ I am indebted for the term "binding commons" to a conference attendee at the Cornell *Development in Question* conference, who suggested the name as I was struggling with what to call the concept. I have misplaced the notes where I jotted down her name and thus cannot give proper credit.

¹⁰ "Appropriators" is used here as Ostrom uses it, as any party which uses and thereby partially depletes the resources. In this context it has no pejorative connotation.

achievement of the position of ownership, in which community is, in limited fashion through the powers of the trust, interposed into the formal relationship between state actors and other land owners on the one hand, and the land on the other.

Critically, in the context of Scott's interest in governance and of local knowledge, the knowledge which is produced via the community infrastructure mediated by the binding commons is given far greater power to become established as fact, both on the land itself and in the view of the state. This has multiple important consequences. First, bringing the community infrastructure of knowledge production into the stronger position of ownership creates a venue for the kinds of *metis* that Scott values to be spoken into greater systems of knowledge, to influence decision making, and in some cases to be translated into *techne* and become both more established and more portable. As MacPhail (2002) articulates in her examination of the creation of the Assynt Crofters Trust, the trust became a mechanism by which subaltern speech acts could be completed; concerns of the community that had previously gone unheard were now received into a context and achieved recognition. Second, the degree to which the concerns of the actors in a community actor-network are included or excluded in their relations to the community infrastructure and their ability to be heard will become significantly more consequential in the case of community ownership. Where before local actors may have been uniformly ignored in the decision-making power that comes with ownership, those interests will be differentially empowered based on the forms of community knowledge production. Third, as Mackenzie and others emphasized, the acts of taking up the responsibilities of ownership and enacting new projects will result in a re-working of those community dynamics. As she asserts, "Community 'becomes'

through debate – about national park status, wind turbines, small-scale hydro installations, house insulation; it also becomes through action." (Mackenzie 2013, 224)

Research Program

Scottish land reform has thereby achieved some of its greatest successes by developing and expanding the role of community, specifically in the realm of community ownership. Scholarship on community ownership has increasingly found the institution of community to be both central and ambiguous, with its particular forms changing depending on context. As my review of the scholarship into community itself shows, articulations of community which merely treat it as a static form or a harmless benevolence fall short and do not reflect empirical experiences of community.

Building on scholarship which tightly associates the production of community with commoning, a stronger, more dynamic understanding of community emerges. By uniting this with methodologies and ontologies from science and technology studies and indigenous and feminist scholars who have responded to it, community may be seen specifically as a space of knowledge production. Given the power of ownership, the production of that knowledge critically informs and shapes the execution of local and state interests, and as it does so reshapes the processes of community itself.

From this theoretical and ontological foundation, this study can now move onto its empirical phase. My aim here is develop and deploy a model for understanding community ownership that understands community as mediated through *binding commons*, notable for having its own agency within the actor-network of community. In the next chapter, I develop a methodology based on this foundation, which incorporates observations from

landscape methods, text analysis, and interview data, which I then present the results of in subsequent chapters.

Methodology

This chapter documents the methods, methodological theory, sites, and sources of data which are used in this study. I first cover the theoretical works which inform the selection and deployment of the multidisciplinary methods used here. I then discuss the specific sites, localities, community trusts, and actors which I have chosen to focus on, along with the field work executed and the collection of data. Finally, I discuss the ways in which I chose to analyze these data.

Methodological Theory

This section provides an overview of the theoretical groundings that inform the development of the research methodology. I specifically cover the ways in which theories of knowledge production interact with theories and methods of geography and landscape analysis.

Analyzing physical and social changes as a whole

During a virtual talk for the University of Virginia, geographer Katherine McKittrick declared that despite trying she found it impossible to separate the production of knowledge from the production of space. As I relayed to her at the time, hearing this was a relief given that in the pursuit of this study, the two kept crashing back into each other. As I have tried to understand the processes underlying the transformation of these spaces, the methods originally designed to help understand the production of space have been useful in

understanding production of knowledge and facts, and vice versa. Like McKittrick, after tiring of trying to keep those methods in their boundaries, I decided to accept that unsplitable nexus.

As such, the work in this study to document and assess the production of space includes the tools of the loosely assembled interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies (STS). This study treats physical artifacts that constitute spaces as the products of specific social processes that create them, maintain them, and alter them over time. In particular, I use actor-network theory (ANT), as well as feminist critiques of technoscience and its adjacents, as these bodies of theory have particularly strong understandings of the social situation of material objects and elements. Similarly, in inverse, I use methods such as cultural landscape inventories and theory, usually used to study land and spaces, to help explain how community knowledge is produced.

This central purpose of this dissertation is to document, assess, and explain the development of community buyouts of estates in the highlands and islands, the landscape transformations facilitated by changes in ownership, and differences in outcomes between community owning bodies. I specifically focus on "community" as a critical but poorly theorized institution, particularly in relation to the physical landscapes that embrace those communities, and attempt to understand community land ownership through an examination and more rigorous theorization of that institution.

Actor-Network Theory: Modernity and Ontology

One of my first moves in this work will be to treat "community" and "landscape" not as signifiers of a human population and a non-human terrain, respectively, but as two

inseparable phenomena which overlap so much as to verge on indistinguishability at points. To put it more bluntly, the interrogation of the landscape is an interrogation of community and vice versa. For the sake of clarity in terminology, when I refer to "landscape" in this analysis it will generally involve the visible and tangible aspects of the land and constructed environment, which I discuss further in the context of "the view" in Chapter 4. "Community" will generally refer to the observable social processes, and will particularly be discussed and defined in greater detail in Chapter 5. Again, I stress that for my purposes these are highly overlapping concepts, and I am making the intentional choice to treat them as merely different lenses through which to view the same phenomena, rather than as ontologically distinct categories.

This unity reflects the primary demands of ANT theorists, in particular Latour's claim of the tight link between the modernist project and the separation, rhetorically, of human and non-human actors. Actor-network methods specify an ontology which categorizes the nouns in a narrative based not on their status as human vs. non-human, natural vs. artificial, tame vs. wild, or built vs. incidental. Instead, ANT researchers assemble nouns in these accounts based on how they act on and are acted on by actors in ways that are observable, either directly or indirectly. The "natural" world does not narrowly determine the shape of human relations or society, nor are purely human relations and structures solely responsible for the state of the non-human world around them.

Notably, this approach differs from more humanist-derived lenses that grant agency solely to humans and treat non-humans (and, as discussed in Chapter 4, sometimes racialized, gendered, or otherwise othered humans) as simply "out there" waiting to be discovered through heroic adventures of exploration or examination. It also differs from

narratives which play to notions of environmental determinism, where human society emerges along lines dictated by the physical environment. Instead, the ANT methodology focuses on producing strong, coherent accounts of networks, potentially including hierarchies, which emerge directly from empirical observation of the actions and tensions between the actors in the account.

This proves particularly useful in observation of community and landscape, particularly in concert with the feminist methods discussed in the next section, because it understands that material, non-human elements of the landscape do not wait for themselves, their origins, or their meanings to be "discovered." Instead, those elements themselves engage in active participation in the production of the networks through which they become visible. Similarly, human interlocutors (who differ from their non-human counterparts by being able to agree to taped interviews) are not required to be authoritative sources on their surroundings, but instead illustrate the networks they are part of through own relations and interactions with the landscape. As I will discuss in this next section, feminist theories of knowledge provide practical methodological frameworks for doing rigorous empirical work while keeping my position as a researcher grounded in a explicitly limited viewpoint.

Systematic partial perspective, concerns, and silences

Feminist critiques of knowledge production have taken certain forms of empirical knowledge production to task for a kind of arrogance and paternalism. At the same time, many of the same feminist theorists have done extensive work to articulate ways to still produce rigorous, systematic research while avoiding modernist science's worst tendencies. In her classic essay *Situated Knowledges: the Power of Partial Perspective*, Donna Haraway

insists that all of these remonstrations from feminists to avoid what she calls the "god trick" of assuming a totalizing, impartial, purely rational and unsituated view should not drive us to a point of relativism and helplessness. Indeed, Haraway insists that relativist and totalizing views are not opposites of each other, but rather mirror images of the same supposedly all-illuminating (and therefore blinding) insight. True attempts at objective knowledge production must inherently come from situated, partial perspective that keeps tabs on how those attempts are situated and the mediating processes and actors that the observer uses to produce narratives of reality.

Haraway elects to use the same language of "actors" and "actants" as ANT theorists as a way of avoiding this deception, but acknowledges that this invites trouble of its own sort.

There remains the problem of exactly who gets to do the acting in these narratives. Her solution again returns to partial perspective:

I try to get out of the trouble my language invites by stressing that the agencies and actors are never preformed, prediscursive, just out there, substantial, concrete, neatly bounded before anything happens, only waiting for a veil to be lifted and "land ho!" to be pronounced. Human and nonhuman, all entities take shape in encounters, in practices; and the actors and partners in encounters are not all human, to say the least. Further, many of these nonhuman partners and actors are not very natural, and certainly not original. And all humans are not the Same. (Haraway 1994, 65-66)

Landscape theorist Elizabeth Meyer articulates this same requirement for full situation as applied to landscape theory.

We should be suspect of the generalizations that "transcend the boundaries of culture and region." Instead, theoretical work should be contingent, particular, and situated. Grounding in the immediate, the particular, and the circumstantial—the attributes of situational criticism—is an essential characteristic of landscape architectural design and theory. Landscape theory must rely on the specific, not the general, and like situational and feminist criticism landscape architectural design and theory must be based on observation. . . . It is not about the idealist or absolute universals. It finds meaning, form, and structure in the site as it is. The landscape does not sit silent awaiting the arrival of an architectural subject. (Meyer 2002, 167-168)

Similarly, Latour's method describes the use of an "oligopticon," a neologism meaning a particular position of *limited* sight. He coins this term in contrast to the *panopticon*, the all-seeing prison tower, made famous by Jeremy Bentham and Michel Foucault. The oligoptycon refers to a position at a particular moment in observation (or later in the production of the account) from which actions, concerns, and entanglements arrive from specific sites that can be documented, and to which (and through which) the inquiry can proceed.

One criticism of this kind of strong focus on the specific, located, and particular is that it prevents any kind of theorization beyond narrow spaces and particular situations. (see Winner 1993 in particular for this among other critiques.) ANT theorists have partially responded to this criticism by developing a series of specific mechanisms for finding actors in the narrative that do the work of reproducing systems between specific situations. Latour's methodological book, *Re-assembling the Social*, breaks this down into moves, the first which particularizes, the second which allows for a limited and specific generalization. His "oligoptycon" accomplishes the move of "localizing the global," or insisting that actions and entanglements never arrive from the "global," which is to say both everywhere and nowhere, but rather from specific other sites through specific actions. What is visible from the oligoptycon should be understood not as "matters of fact," but rather "matters of concern." This is to say, the conduit by which actors can be seen to be connected is first visible as actions of concern, defined in the most abstract sense here by Latour, from within the oligoptycon.

The second move, in Latour's typically clever but confusing terminology, is to "relocate the local"—which is to say, once a specific set of actors, entanglements, forms, and processes have been assembled into a narrative of a sociotechnical actor-network, the next job of the

scholar is to identify where those forms get replicated, and how. In his own research, his response to this problem was to develop the concept of the "immutable mobile." Latour calls this a kind of "knowledge-object" which can be moved or reproduced to sites which, in the right environmental conditions, allow it to effectively travel and operate unmodified. Hence, a situated analysis can identify an actor which operates in a particular way under a set of reproducible conditions. His canonical metaphor is a train as the immutable mobile and train tracks as the related actors which allow for a kind of global immutability of operation (Latour 2005).

One particularly trenchant response to Latour's focus on matters of concern came from Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, who took Latour's methodology under examination and raised the question of exactly whose concerns are permitted to generate the visible networks in ANT accounts. While Latour's focus on matters of concern was, in many ways, a direct response to critiques from feminists such as Haraway, Puig de la Bellacasa calls out Latour for still regenerating an epistemology and ontology in which, even without the "god trick," certain partial perspectives are given the authority to dictate what is visible in a given narrative.

In the methodology I have constructed for this study, I attempt to address this limitation by taking particular note of *silences* and *absences* in given narratives. My use of multiple forms of observation and data proves particularly useful here, as certain sites and actors may appear important in one method but be nearly invisible in another. Some of these can simply be moments in which two closely related subjects emerge in interviews with the same person, about which great detail is given about one subject but almost none about a very similar topic. Some appear in pointed refusals to discuss certain topics. At a larger

level, as I will discuss below, I had a very difficult time recruiting interviews with opponents or skeptics of community ownership, and residents of the communities under study who had no direct experience with trust leadership often deferred to others to speak, despite my repeated insistences that I was attempting to collect non-expert perspectives as well.

Deriving hard conclusions from silences and absences is a process fraught with peril, and in many cases I can do little more than gesture to them as intriguing or puzzling. One form of inference I do attempt in places is to locate the site of the "interruption," as it were. For example, I largely interpret the refusal of opponents and skeptics to be interviewed as an indicator that despite my attempts to perform the role of an unbiased researcher, skeptics have guessed that my narrative is generally in support of community ownership and do not want to help facilitate it. In this instance, the "interruption" that creates the absence in the data is between potential interviewees and myself. However, in other places, it appears that the interruption emerges somewhere between my informants and the sites or actors. Again, while I can generally only speculate as to why those interruptions occur, in some instances other forms of data may provide possible explanations.

One final concern emerges from the limits of the methods and data I deploy here. This study aims to understand transformations occurring via community ownership through a methodology of inspection and documentation of the communities and landscapes in which they occur. I am attempting to produce a narrative which documents situated local conditions with all of the caveats detailed above about situated observation, but which also generalizes to a broader scale. Given the time and effort limits under which this study was performed, I selected four localities on which to focus. In this next section, I discuss what sites I chose and the parameters for which they were chosen.

Sites, scales, and points of situated observation

The sites in this study were selected to provide a broad-based assessment of community ownership in Scotland, and as such the trusts selected deliberately represent a wide range of ages, including the two oldest community buyouts as well as two very recent buyouts, as well as two trusts that are midway between them. While any short-term study that does not do longitudinal data collection will struggle to assess long-term impacts, this approach does allow for some assessment of the state of community buyouts at the beginning of their spans as well as how they are faring 20 years into community ownership.

Two adages from theoretical literature informed these choices. The first was Elinor Ostrom's offhand comment that the origins and original conditions of long-lived collective property regimes were lost "in the mists of time." (Ostrom 1990, 56) While this adage is almost tautologically true, given the impossibility of knowing now what new regimes will stand the tests of time, it is possible to view the efforts of people who are in the processes of attempting to set up what they hope to be a long-lived collective property regime.

The second is an adage from STS studies, emphasized by but not unique to Latour (2005) and Callon (1984), to seek out moments of controversy. In STS terms, as discussed in the literature review, these controversies indicate when possibilities in form, fact, and process are "open." In retrospect, as decisions, possibilities, and sociotechnical systems reach "closure," outcomes appear as if they were always teleologically fixed upon the actual outcome. Examination of controversies on the other hand, offer a view into moments where the eventual outcomes are determined, and therefore present the best view into the mechanisms by which that determination happens. As such, the trusts and localities I

selected represent a combination of the oldest (and at 25 years, even the Assynt Crofters Trust is still comparably a very young collective property regime) and some of the youngest community ownership arrangements. Eigg and the Assynt Crofters Trust represent the oldest community trusts. The Assynt Crofters Trust and the Assynt Foundation represent two trusts with very different focuses and trajectories operating in much the same area, and as such highlight the degree to which both the particulars of the landscape and the structure of the organization shape outcomes. The Assynt Crofters Trust and the Pairc Trust, in contrast to the others, own estates which consist almost entirely of crofting townships.

I selected the Pairc Trust in part because my preliminary fieldwork coincided with the official buyout celebration *ceilidh* (which occurred months after the formal transfer in order to get better weather). Similarly, I added the Ulva buyout and the associated North West Mull Community Woodland Trust very late in planning, because of the immediacy of the buyout. My fieldwork schedule allowing me to be present on Ulva both on the day that the buyout was agreed to as well as on the day that the official handover of ownership occurred. Both cases afforded me the opportunity to see first-hand an estate at the moment of buyout, and to tap into the views and experiences of buyout leaders in the moments of the buyout occurring.

Focal Community Owned Estates



Trust	Area	Trust-Owned Lands		Designated Community	
		<i>Population</i>	<i>Households</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Households</i>
Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust	Eigg	83	38	83	38
Assynt Crofters Trust	North Assynt Estate	344	172	344	172
Assynt Foundation	Assynt	0	0	1011	485
NW Mull Community Woodland Co.	North West Mull	6	3	541	227
Pairc Trust	Pairc Estate	408	200	408	200

1: *Population of lands owned by community owners, as well as population in communities designated as represented by community ownership bodies. Numbers for the Assynt Crofters Trust are for the total number of residents who live on the estate, which includes non-crofters who do not hold voting rights in the trust.*

Eigg

As the first-launched community buyout in Scotland, the isle of Eigg and the trust which owns it continually re-appear in popular narratives about community ownership in Scotland. The island itself is one of four (along with Muck, Rum, and Canna) that constitute the "Small Isles" within the Inner Hebrides, a cluster of islands which sits just south of Skye and north of the Ardnamurchan peninsula. Of the four, Eigg is the closest to the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry terminal at Mallaig and the marina at Arisaig and is the most populous. The 2011 census of Scotland puts Eigg's population at 83, while Trust officers now place the number at around 100. By contrast, the census puts the combined 2011 population of all the isles at 153.

This eventual successful buyout originated from two initiatives that came together. First, the locally initiated Isle of Eigg Residents Association (IERA) formed under private ownership to present the island residents' hopes and proposals for improvement. Second, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT) was formally incorporated in 1991 by four non-resident activists. In coordination with the residents' association, the IEHT first incorporated the specific local legal adaptation of the community land trust model which would become the standard for community buyouts. When the buyout ultimately became successful in 1997 following an extended, widely publicized fundraising campaign, the IERA assumed majority control of the IEHT board of directors (Fyffe 1997).

Since the buyout, Eigg has undertaken improvements to the local estate-owned housing stock and has seen a near doubling of its resident population. Its biggest claim to fame has come from its construction of a new electricity grid supplied almost entirely by wind, solar, and hydroelectric energy, which provides gridded electrical power for most residents. At the time of my final fieldwork visit, a CBS 60 Minutes documentary crew had left the island just weeks prior, with the coverage focused on the historical buyout, the electrical grid, and the natural scenery of the island.

Isle of Eigg



Assynt

The Assynt region occupies a roughly triangular peninsula near the northwest corner of mainland Scotland. As with most areas of the highlands, the population is concentrated along the coastlines, particularly in the central harbor village of Lochinver. Most of the outlying areas of the peninsula feature low, rolling hills and moorland extending to the more fertile areas near the water, but the district is bordered by a series of much taller mountains which set the land on the peninsula apart, including several peaks favored by hikers.

In the early 1990s while the buyout efforts on Eigg were in the midst of ongoing stops and starts, a group of crofters in Assynt formed the Assynt Crofters Trust and succeeded in executing a community buyout of the North Lochinver Estate (since renamed the North Assynt Estate). In 1988, the Vestey family, heirs to a frozen food empire who had previously owned all of Assynt, split off this northern portion from the main Assynt estate and sold it to a European investment group, which very shortly thereafter went bankrupt. After hearing of plans to subdivide the estate further for sale, and drawing inspiration from the ongoing community buyout efforts on Eigg, in 1992 the Assynt Crofters Trust (ACT) was formed. By 1993, the trust had successfully negotiated a purchase of the land, with trust leader Allan MacRae famously announcing to the community, "we have won the land!" Together with the efforts on Eigg (with leaders of both efforts widely citing the other for providing ongoing inspiration and encouragement), the two trusts became the inspiration for a string of successful community buyouts and ultimately the passage of the landmark Land Reform (Scotland) Act of 2003 (LRA 2003), which enshrined two new legal community rights to buy in the Scottish highlands and islands.

Whereas Eigg provides a vote in its residents association to all residents, the ACT is controlled by a board of directors elected from each of the crofting townships on the estate. Only those holding a crofting tenancy are allowed to either stand as directors or vote in those elections. Residents of the North Assynt Estate without crofting tenancies (the intricacies of which will be discussed in Chapter 4) have no formal representation or voting rights on the board, nor do those who work on the estate if they have no crofting tenancy. In addition to managing basic property management issues of crofting leases, the small rents collected from crofts, and fishing and hunting rights on the estate, the ACT operates a small grid-connected hydroelectric generator at Loch Poll, which provides the bulk of steady income for the trust, and has built a few small non-crofted social housing units on the estate.

Twelve years after the purchase of the North Assynt Estate, some of the same activists from the effort which produced the ACT formed the Assynt Foundation. The foundation used new provisions in the LRA 2003 and funds from the Scottish Land Fund to purchase the Glencanisp and Drumrunie estates from the Vestey family on behalf of the entire Assynt community. The two estates, which cover 44,000 acres in the more mountainous southern part of Assynt, were at the time managed as deer shooting estates, had (and still have) no residents living on the land. The main built assets of the estate were the Glencanisp lodge, a dilapidated Victorian hunting lodge, and its associated stable area. Post-buyout, the Foundation renovated the lodge, improved the hiking trails up the iconic mountains on the estates, and built an arts studio on land behind the lodge, among other projects. Several other post-buyout efforts to build houses, establish new crofts, and build either wind or hydroelectric projects were all eventually abandoned. At the time of my fieldwork in 2018, the Foundation was suffering serious financial difficulty, and had been given a small grant

by Highlands and Islands Enterprise to hire a general manager to try to find a sustainable path to financial stability.

Assynt Overview Map with Major Estate Boundaries



- Quinag (John Muir Trust)
- Assynt Estates (Vestey Family)
- Little Assynt (Culag Community Woodland Trust)
- Ardvar (Privately owned)
- North Assynt (Assynt Crofters Trust)
- Canisp and Drumrunie (Assynt Foundation)

Estate boundaries derived from those published at <http://whooownsscotland.org.uk/>

2
 Miles

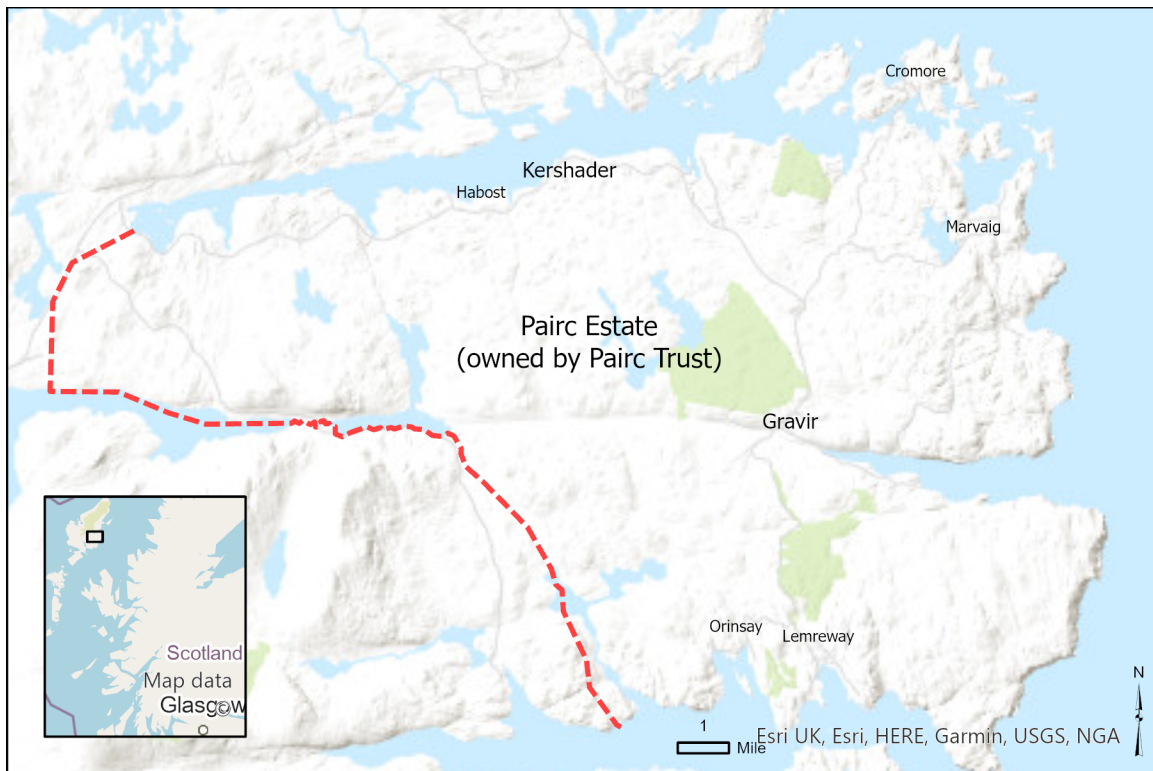
Pairc

The Pairc Estate sits on a peninsula locally known as the "South Lochs" area on the southeast side of the isle of Lewis, and encompasses 11 crofting townships and their associated common grazings. The estate's population had been almost entirely cleared in the 19th century and turned into a deer shooting estate, an event which precipitated a nationally consequential land raid by neighboring residents. In 1887 during a period of low crop production and low wages on Lewis, a group of residents from three nearby areas joined to illegally hunt and kill a large number of deer from the then-Pairc deer forest. Their immediate goal was to harvest the meat and for their families and neighbors to relieve a period of intense hunger. However, the ensuing conflict with local authorities and demands for allocation of fallow land to help relieve poverty provided some of the strongest impetus for the passage of a second round of Crofters Acts in the early 1890s, in order to designate new lands for crofting. Decades later, in the early 20th century, crofts were re-established on the Pairc peninsula and some population returned.

In 2003, the private owner of the estate proposed construction of a new wind farm on the estate, including a program by which some local residents and crofters would receive payouts from the presence of local windmills. The unequal and ambiguous nature of the promised payouts angered residents, many of whom felt that the payments were unnecessarily divisive between them, and in response the community elected to pursue a community buyout of the estate under the provisions of the LRA 2003 for a compulsory purchase of a crofting estate. As the first and to date only use of the crofting estate compulsory purchase provision, the buyout went into extended litigation and negotiations

with the owner, until in 2016 a purchase agreement was finally reached, thirteen years after the buyout effort began.

The successful buyout built upon the existence of a much older cooperative organization, the Pairc Community Co-operative or *Co-chomunn Na Pairc*, located in the village of Kershader, which continues to operate a small museum, cafe, hostel, community store, and auto fuel service. The trust is now embarking on establishing new social housing in the area, along with other projects.



Ulva and North West Mull

The broader, loosely defined community of north west Mull occupies the greater portion of the northern peninsula of the isle of Mull, covering most of the area with the exception of the land along the eastern coastline and in the immediate environs of the island's largest village, Tobermory. The more expansive, less densely populated northwestern corner of the

island contains a few small coastal townships and villages, including Dervaig, Calgary, and Ulva Ferry, along with several largely unpopulated interior hills and ridges.

The North West Mull Community Woodland Company was set up in 2006 on behalf of the north west Mull community in order to purchase two large woodland tracts which had been deemed otherwise un-harvestable. The company was able to negotiate a contract with a third party timber harvesting company to help finance a 16.5 km haul road¹¹, as well as land access agreements with a number of surrounding landowners. The company now operates at a financial profit from timber sales as well as from a single hydroelectric project, directing surplus funds into community-related projects.

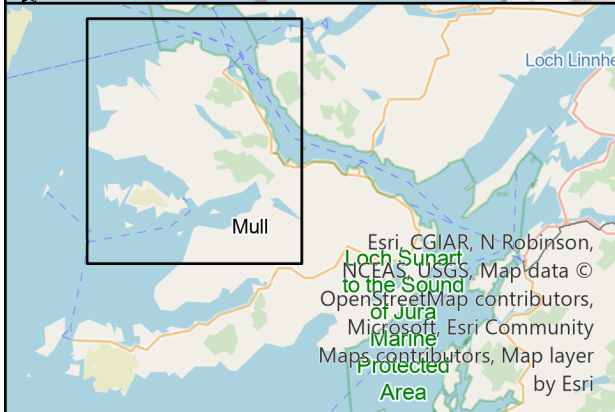
The island estate of Ulva sits across a narrow strip of water on the southwest side of the peninsula (unsurprisingly, across from the settlement of Ulva Ferry. While the island historically had a population of over 300 people and within the last few decades several dozen, by 2017, the population was down to 6, including the island's owner, a family of four, and one other resident. In late 2017 the residents became aware of the owner's plans to put the estate on the market and, through the existing institutional vehicle of the North West Mull Community Woodland Company, filed a right-to-buy application with the Scottish government. Because the application was deemed "not timeous" due to the owner having already prepared plans to sell, the government required a number of additional procedures to demonstrate strong community support. These measures included signed signatures of support from over 35 percent of the designated community's residents, in this case the northwest Mull area. After buyout organizers met those goals, the Scottish Land Fund


¹¹ A road sufficiently engineered so as to support the weight of commercial timber harvesting and hauling equipment

approved over £4 million in support of the £4.5 million sale price, the largest Land Fund expenditure on a single estate to date. In May of 2018, the sale was legally agreed, and in June the island was handed over to the trust.

The first project undertaken by the community company was refurbishing much of the island's still standing but derelict and abandoned housing stock, as well as refurbishing the main lodge, Ulva House, into a museum, trust offices, and residential apartments. Volunteer repairs to the island's stone walls and gardens have been underway and the trust has plans to re-open the mothballed hostel as a bunkhouse.

Northwest Mull and NWMCWC-Owned Estates



 Parcels owned by NWMCWC

Data and methods

This section documents the specific data I collected and the methods I used to both collect and to analyze those data. These data can generally be divided into two categories: on-site data collection, both in the form of resident interviews and landscape inventories, and data which I collect from national level sources, including both publicly available quantitative and qualitative data, as well as interviews with national-level leaders not tied to a specific local community or trust.

The methods here were chosen specifically to provide an integrated view, using different forms of data in intersecting ways. Because the model I develop here articulates how community, ownership, and land intersect in the community ownership movement, these methods allow me to interrogate this intersection through multiple approaches. The result provides a view of the land reacting to organizations in the human population as well as human community members responding to elements of the land.

Specific logs of dates, locations, and interviews, as well as interview questions, coding sheets, IRB forms, and other specifics of data collection are available in Appendix A.

On-site data collection

Data collected in each of the focal localities consisted primarily of modified cultural landscape inventories and interviews with local residents. In a small number of instances, interviews with residents included walking or driving tours of landscapes that integrated the two.

Landscape observation: A modified cultural landscape inventory

The cultural landscape inventory (CLI) method primarily serves as a professional procedure for documentation of landscapes, usually those deemed to have some kind of historical significance. Frequently, these are for documenting a site for purposes of listing in a governmental register or for obtaining public benefits, such as tax credits, for private preservation of a site. A conventional cultural landscape inventory documents the landscape with a focus the material conditions of the site, as well as informed assessments of connections to natural and historical concerns. As one of the primary consumers of CLIs, the U.S. National Park Service publishes its guide for their production in the Cultural

Landscapes Inventory Professional Practices Guide:¹²

The CLI is an evaluated inventory of all cultural landscapes (landscapes, component landscape, landscape features, and component landscape features) having historical significance in which the National Park Service has or plans to acquire legal interest. . . The CLI has three primary functions:

- 1) to identify cultural landscapes and provide information on their location
- 2) to record information about these resources related to their identification, description, historical development, landscape characteristics and features, and management
- 3) to assist managers and cultural resource specialists in determining treatment and management decisions and to record those decisions (Page 1998, 9)

Notably, "historical significance" in the case of the National Park Service's program, or other forms or variants of "significance" in other specializations of the form, stands as the lodestar around which the CLI is organized. Component features of the landscape need not be individually significant to be included in the CLI, but the overall documentation should

¹² For the sake of parsimony and availability, I refer to the 1998 version of the Park Service's CLI Professional Practices guide, which is now considerably outdated. The CLI process continues to evolve and change, both within NPS's requirements as well as in the requirements for other agencies, but these changes are largely not germane to the custom derivation of the CLI for the purposes of a research oriented, ANT-articulated CLI which I present here.

ultimately serve the goal of answering questions of management of significance. This includes documenting the presence of significant interest in the site, the current condition of the site, and the current and needed management for maintaining and presenting that significance. In practice, the primary thrust of the practice was summarized to me as "just document what's there." (Rob McGinnis, personal communication)

As I am deploying the practice in the service of investigative research more than documentary methods, my procedures focus on a different set of both criteria and analysis. Two methodological departures in this approach are worth noting here. First, in the Park Service's CLI, significance is generally bestowed upon features through their connection to a historical person, event, era, or other organizing principle. In particular, the NPS requires the articulation of a "period of significance," which is to be represented by the assembly of landscape features. Again, features outside of the period of significance are not excluded from the CLI nor are they necessarily slated for removal from the site, but in the NPS's framework representing the period of significance in the landscape remains the focus.

By contrast, this study focuses on how community processes, including that of community ownership, are being enacted through the more-than-human networks which include the landscape itself and which are mediated by the features therein, with the actions leaving visible and discoverable traces. The concern in this case is with active contemporary interventions so as to evaluate and advise on contemporary planning and economic development policy. As such, the period of significance in my CLI might be said to be the present and immediate future. In my interviews to identify these processes, I used the gloss of "importance" to try to tease out these actions from residents and trust leaders. (I note that

"importance" is a broad and somewhat awkward gloss, but hardly considerably moreso than "significance.")

Second, the CLI as articulated by the NPS organizes the site documentation around "landscape characteristics," listing of a dozen categories, all of which should be attended to in the CLI. (See **Table 2** for a list from the 1998 Guide) While the guide emphasizes that there will be overlap between these categories and that importance will often stem from the interaction between them, the methodology as presented largely organizes them into these layers for articulation.

Natural Systems and Features	Buildings and Structures
Spacial Organization	Cluster Arrangement
Land Use	Constructed Water Features
Cultural Traditions	Views and Vistas
Circulation	Small-Scale Features
Topography	Archeological Sites
Vegetation	

Table 2: Landscape characteristic types defined the NPS CLI Guide (Page 1998, 27-28)

One significant shortcoming of the conventional CLI, however, is that the reports generated from CLIs are often articulated only in the given categories. Topography is cataloged in a single section, vegetation in another, and so on. Relationships between categories are often presented in a kind of "stacked" form of layers—vegetation sits on top of topography, while cultural practices in turn build on present vegetation. While this produces a useful static consideration of the site, the rubric of the conventional CLI provides

little space to account for actions and connections between two elements in different categories. If, as this dissertation asserts, the landscape and the community should be treated as an integrated whole, a strictly segmented CLI will present a fractured view of the landscape. Indeed, if the landscape is going to be "cultural," not only will the historical conditions which initially brought elements to the land be important, but also the processes which have changed, maintained, or redacted their presence and condition be catalogued too.

In the form of CLI which I propose and execute here, I bring the previously discussed methodological considerations from STS, particularly actor-network theory, to bear. In this analysis, the features of the landscape are a starting point for understanding the site, much as they are in a more conventional CLI, but my goal is to document actions taken between the more-than-human actors of the site. The distinction here is admittedly subtle—in a conventional CLI, the artifacts and features on the site present evidence of historical actions and the processes that have maintained, weathered, degraded, or otherwise changed them in the times since. In short, the conventional CLI is a documentation of actions past. In the actor-network CLI I am articulating, I am looking for ongoing, extant actions between landscape features and the less-visible parts of the community.

Functionally, this produces a different kind of account than the conventional CLI. Where the conventional CLI presents a landscape in stasis, the actor-network CLI foregrounds not just process and connection, but the ways in which those connections meet at particular sites of interest. These connections become particularly important when focusing on actions of maintenance and care; extant elements of a landscape may only be there because of actions of maintenance and care which arrive from other categories. Further, this method illustrates

affective ties which people may have with components of the landscape. As later chapters show, these ties can have strong impacts on the outcome of processes which determine the composition of the landscape.

More aligned with the conventional CLI is my focus on component landscapes of the estates. As mentioned above, limitations on fieldwork time and effort combined with the enormous terrain encompassed by many of these rural communities and estates means that a full landscape inventory of the estates is well beyond my capacity. As such, my field work focused on collecting CLI data in specific component landscapes on the estates. In order to select these sites, I sought out spaces that were indicated either in existing narratives of the communities (such as written histories or articles about them) or in conversation with community members, both informally and in recorded interviews. I collected documentation on sites using a combination of photographs and dictated descriptions of sites along with GPS tracking of the site to allow for mapping or correlation with other data sources. After collection, I performed a recursive coding of the collected data.

Among the products of the CLI are both maps and photos. Primary map data were collected or reproduced by me unless otherwise noted. Similarly, all photos were taken by me unless otherwise noted.

On site interviews

Over the course of three fieldwork trips to Scotland, one in 2016 and two in 2018, I conducted interviews with 28 respondents. These interviews focused on reflections on the landscape in the communities, the places of importance, the history of community ownership in the area, and several questions intended to evoke personal reflections and

opinions about a variety of topics. While I worked from a base set of questions, the interviews were semi-structured and I added follow-up questions on topics that came up, which in many cases involved trust projects, local controversies, difficulties in executing goals, or other dynamics.

The data from collected interviews served several purposes. With regard to the landscape inventories, in addition to informing the selection of component landscapes to document, portions of the interviews illuminate data from the landscape inventories, contextualizing to the physically collected and more formally documented sources from which I drew. One question in particular, "What are the most important places in the community?" provided an open-ended (one that some interviewees complained was overly so) opportunity for community members to steer the inventory towards places to which they assigned importance. Follow-up questions provided information on the processes by which those spaces gain their importance.

Further, interview responses informed both selection of component landscapes for further documentation as well as for selecting elements within them for further examination. During interviews, as well during review of transcripts and in subsequent field work, I followed the ANT methodological adage to look for controversies and points of ongoing tension or conflict. In this work, controversies may take the conventional form, as in between people or parties of people. However, they may extend beyond that form to tensions with the built environment, with elements of the landscape, or even between non-human elements of the landscape, such as between species. These incongruities may represent a specific form of the "silences and absences" I discuss in the methodology section above. Even simple incongruities between images of the landscape (and by here I must

again return to my own situated view in order to establish what qualifies as incongruous) become fertile points of exploration, such as on multiple estates, the ongoing presence of live, outdoor palm trees growing in the cold, wind-swept Hebrides, or artifacts of technological projects which failed to accomplish their stated purpose.

More directly, however, in many cases the respondents furthered articulations of their ways of understanding community, land, and their relation to the actions of the trusts and the long term health of their local populations. In other cases the reflections of respondents on matters of importance, connection, and success of community enterprises illustrates important differences between ways in which different landscape elements are understood, or ways that the human members of the population of the community form connections with each other and achieve outcomes.

A note on names and anonymity

The consent form that all recorded interviewees in this study signed provided the option of authorizing the use of their real name or not. While many interviewees authorized the use of their real names, some did not. Because these communities have relatively small populations, they are places where "everybody knows everybody." Further, upon completion this dissertation will be sent to the trust offices of all of the community trusts mentioned here for inclusion in their archives, and multiple interviewees have asked to be able to read it as well. As such, it is highly probable that these quotes will be read by people in the focal areas. Because there are multiple instances where quotes include criticism, and because it is neither my desire nor ethically justifiable to gratuitously generate controversy, I have eliminated names except in a few circumstances. First, some quotes necessarily involve

people with specific relations to other specific actors, such that any local resident could easily deduce exactly who gave the quote from context. Second, as Latour calls for in his articulation of ANT methodology, my interviews with these respondents are not simply providing raw data, they are providing their own ontologies and interpretations of their communities. In my theorizing from these data, in many ways I am doing little more than translating some of these articulations into the language of academic theory. In other places respondents provided particularly pithy or succinct summaries of these theories. In those instances to not give credit for those quotes and ideas would border on unethical appropriation. If either of these two cases is operable and if the respondent gave permission to use their name, I include them in the text.

National-level public data and interviews

Other data were collected from public portals, specifically GIS data, census data, and public consultation responses. Further, I conducted a limited set of interviews with national-level leaders. The emphasis in these interviews was to gauge perceptions from national figures on the state of land reform in general and on specific trusts. In two instances, I spoke with respondents who both had significant involvement in one of the focal trusts as well as positions of national exposure. While these interviews were small in number, they provided valuable context to understanding both overall trajectories of the trusts as well as ways in which national views could diverge from local ones.

Text analysis of public consultation responses to the Land Reform Review Group Report, 2014

As part of my preliminary research, I analyzed responses to the public consultation for the Land Reform Review Group's (LRRG) report. The LRRG's report was commissioned by the Scottish government as a follow-up to the first ten years of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The report was issued in 2014, after which a public consultation period ensued, which in turn informed the eventual drafting of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016.

In the particulars of the Scottish governmental system, the consultation process presents citizens, organizations, and other stakeholders with a formal venue to engage and respond to the text of the report. The open consultation ran from December 2014 through February 2015. Individuals and organizations were invited to submit responses to specific topics of the bill which would then be included in the final legislative report. During the open period, respondents filed consultations both electronically and via paper submission. Subsequently, submissions from respondents who permitted their answers to be published were published on the government website, <http://consult.scotland.gov.uk/>. I used a custom-written "web scraper" software script to retrieve all of the responses and to obtain very crude characterizations of the nature of the responses.

The consultation consists of 45 questions posed to respondents which reference the general recommendations of the LRRG report. The questions are divided into sections, almost all of which open with a yes or no question starting with, "Do you agree . . ." where "yes" indicates agreement with one of the conclusions of the LRRG. These are then followed by more open-ended questions asking for comment on the details of the recommendation, or for any further comments. Respondents may choose to respond directly

to the questions or may submit more general overall responses to the report. For the “Consultation on the future of Land Reform in Scotland,” 1,076 responses were made public. An example response is given in Appendix A.

National-level leaders

Finally, in order to obtain a view of how land reform was understood and articulated in discourses which were not grounded in the experiences of specific sites or trusts, I recruited interviewees who either held positions in government or who had worked on broad-scale advocacy for or against community ownership and land reform.

Demographic and geospatial data

In original planning for this study, I planned to do more extensive processing and analysis with publicly available census and geospatial data. Unfortunately, in the course of attempting these analyses, I discovered that these data are not uniformly available across all of the focal trusts, due to limitations in published sources. One of the major limitations, often highlighted by land reform campaigner and now member of Scottish Parliament, Andy Wightman, is the lack of a complete, standardized source of parcel and ownership information across Scotland. While a unified land register is in process (in no small part due to Wightman's efforts), some estates do not have published, online sources of basic information such as boundary polygons, building footprints, and full ownership information. Further, where it is available, in some instances such as that for the Pairc Estate it has not been digitized to standard GIS data formats, and is only available as a series of images of section maps which must be mosaicked together using raster techniques, then

boundaries extracted via features. For other estates, these data have been made available through Wightman's own web publication, whoownsscotland.org.uk, which is the product of Wightman scanning and digitizing large numbers of paper records from the archives in Edinburgh. While I have processed as much of these data as I have been able to acquire, because of differences in availability the same maps and analyses are not available for each trust.

A further limitation comes from standard data granularity protections in Scotland's Census, which parallel protections in US Census data. Because of the very small populations on many of the estates, demographic information is not published at a granularity which is useful to this analysis. For example, no data are available from Scotland's Census, even basic population counts, for Eigg itself, as those data are aggregated to the level of all of the small isles. For other, more subdivided data sets, the data are aggregated to include all of the mainland area around Mallaig and Arisaig.

More consistent spatial data are available from remotely sensed sources, including land use data sets derived from satellite data. Owing to project limitations on data processing and data acquisition, analyses of land use and land cover change using these data were dropped from the originally planned analyses. Instead, geospatial and secondary data provide supplemental information in mapping and summary tables, and not for more extensive spatial or statistical analyses.

Additionally, as this work aims to address the general phenomenon of community ownership in the northwest Scotland, in certain circumstances I bring observations and findings from preliminary fieldwork into the final analysis, including insights from trusts that were not part of the primary focal communities.

Inventories, coding and analysis

Having collected these data, I performed a series of analyses, each of which integrated components of different data sets.

While I did not carry out the cultural landscape inventory to its full conclusion of a US Park Service-style written inventory, I created a series of GIS layers and maps which, along with the demographic data, make up the reference figures included in the text. Further, I drew out themes from the collected inventory data in the discussion of landscape in Chapter 4.

The text analysis of the LRRG and landscape inventory data collected also further informed the articulation of community, binding commons, and community infrastructure in Chapter 5. However, the primary methodology for that chapter and the case study focused discussion of local knowledge and fact production in Chapter 6 came from standard quantitative coding of the interview data. I developed the codes using a partial cascade method, which required a reciprocal coding of the transcripts in order to check and validate differences which emerged in the process.

Specifically, the codes and themes which emerged were informed by the aforementioned focus on controversies and moments of disruption or interruption. This focus allows for interviews on different trusts about widely divergent topics to be placed in conversation with each other. These controversies or disruptions emerge in different ways in this analysis. Often they were issues that interviewees discussed as examples or illustrations on questions about inclusion in community, important spaces, or the labor involved in community ownership. In other instances, they appear as disjunctions in the narratives or inventories available to me. In this, I must again emphasize that the controversies I identify here are

those visible to my particular situation as an observer, whether they are detailed to me by interviewees or emerge from what appear to me to be disjunctions in the landscape. The reciprocal process of interviewing, performing landscape inventories, and coding helped to identify similar dynamics in related interviews and inventories.

While the total number of interview respondents ultimately fell slightly short of my original targets and largely lacked responses from land reform skeptics and opponents, the richness of details and experiences shared by respondents eventually provided extremely fertile ground for finding and validating theoretical conclusions. Ultimately, the themes presented in the empirical chapters were selected to clearly articulate strong descriptions of community and landscape, develop a model for understanding community, and evaluate that model as an explanatory framework for the differences in outcomes and trajectories that community ownership has produced.

Landscape

Introduction

"We cannae eat the view."

So a driver told my spouse and me, long before I took up this work, as we visited the Isle of Skye, very much as tourists. The statement was a pithy one and memorable in its own right. However, I heard a similar sentiment throughout my field work as well as, I think it's fair to say, the mild but persistent resentment among local residents of the attention paid to the view.

Assynt-based geographer Isobel MacPhail encountered much the same frustrated reaction to "the view" when doing her own field work. A polite comment from her about a living room view leads a male interviewee to an aggressive rebuttal of why admiring the views is silly. As MacPhail notes, "Those who admire views, it is implied, are impractical and fanciful." (MacPhail 2002, p128) In her own response to this, MacPhail notes that "No-one who is making part of their living from tourism . . . is oblivious to what, since the 18th century, *we have learnt to refer to as landscape – or the view.*" (MacPhail 2002, 128, emphasis mine)

In the above comments, however, she clearly problematizes the notion of the view. Even of the word "landscape," has now been received enough that it is uttered back by locals out of almost discipline. Her broader meaning here is that local residents in the Highlands are fully aware of the breathtaking experience that simply having ones eyes open in such spaces

can be. The resentment comes not from some ignorance of aesthetics or of actual distaste for them, but from a different tension.

Scottish land reform and community land ownership, by inspection, revolve around the question of land and relationship. Specifically, they address the formal relationship between the land and the people who live on it, as mediated by the laws and policies of ownership. To develop an account of how changes in this formal relationship translate to changes in the land and the human population that lives there, I start with an examination of the physical elements of these spaces,

This chapter examines community ownership through the notion of *landscape*, which here I understand as the visible assemblage of actors arrayed on the land. I start here with a discussion of the relation of *landscape* to *land* and how visibility, specifically who is doing the looking, must inform any inventory or typology of landscape. I then present a more-than-human community geography of the kinds of spaces in the northwest Scottish highlands and islands that have transitioned to community ownership. I conclude with a discussion of some of the themes and tensions that emerge from this examination, before moving on to a closer examination of the concept of *community* in the next chapter.

The Constructed Landscape of Actors

The theoretical approach I follow here requires a fair bit of care. On the one hand, arriving with the conundrums of landscape theory in tow to make sense of this, I could fall into the trap of an intellectual lens effectively appropriating and, in a way, colonizing the landscape with knowledge production. At the same time, many of the best theoretical critiques of this approach come from post-colonial studies, which in a way re-appropriates

the post-colonial position from the colonized lands back to home country citizens of the United Kingdom. In this respect I owe an enormous debt to the work of Isobel MacPhail whose doctoral work on the Assynt Crofters Trust using a post-colonial approach balances these tensions via Spivak's work on speech acts and the condition of subalternity.

The conundrums of "landscape"

I approach this analysis through the lens of "landscape," which brings in a range of not only theoretical and methodological tools, but also a degree of intellectual baggage and problematic assumptions. As Wylie declares to open his textbook on landscape theory, "landscape is tension." (Wylie 2007, 1) In his ensuing introduction, he identifies four specific tensions, one of which, the "nature/culture" tension, will return in other forms later in this discussion, but for now his third tension, "eye/land," offers useful vocabulary. Dictionary definitions of landscape, as Wylie notes, focus on "scenery" which the "eye can view at once." (Wylie 2007, 6) Wylie follows Daniels and Cosgrove in their essay forward to *Iconography of Landscape*, where they open with the phrase, "landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolizing surroundings." (Daniels and Cosgrove 1989, 1) Again, the tension is placed between landscape as image and landscape as the actual substantial matter of the place--the rock, water, soil, works, biota, and so forth.

But to return briefly to Wylie, his tension names more than just image, but also of eye. And in this instance, the question remains *whose* eye is doing the perceiving. In the canonical notion of the landscape painting, the "eye" is mediated by the aesthetics which surround the artist and which follow the painted artifact through buyers and galleries. In the case of the kind of landscape description and analysis I hope to achieve, the "eye" involved in the

construction of a landscape image here becomes at once more immanent, in the case of the views of the landscape directly perceived, and more distant, in the case of a landscape which many readers will already have imagined notions of. The eye, in this description, is mine; it is ineluctably an outsider view, and while trained in numerous fields for better empirical observation I want to hold the tension that I arrive in these spaces to observe much as every other tourist does.

Iconography and the Highlands

The rugged landscape of northwest Scotland hardly occupies a position of under-imagined spaces. The Highlands remain visible in major works of television and film such as *Braveheart*, *Rob Roy*, and *Outlander*, to name a very small number. The sweeping rocky shorelines and mountains additionally appear as other landscapes in numerous films. As such, any introduction to the landscapes of the highlands and islands of Scotland rarely finds a truly naive reader, as these spaces remain very much steeped in a deep iconography.

It is well beyond the scope of this paper to enter into a full media analysis of the creation of the Scottish highlands myth as Womack (1989) has done, but a few basic tropes deserve at least naming before moving on to attempting to produce at least a somewhat different landscape image. The most simplistic and romantic imaginings center artifacts such as the tartaned kilt, bagpipes, castles, and perhaps some mix of sheep, claymores, tweed, and clans. In these, the highlands are either a historically constrained and therefore elegized, or alternatively a permanently anachronized space outside of history. Somewhat more historicized views incorporate the Highland Clearances, the Jacobite rebellions, perhaps battles such as Bannockburn and Culloden and events such as the Glencoe massacre and the

Gaelic language. In simplistic accounts the people of the highlands are at once heroic and tragic and the spaces they occupied are thus romantically haunted.

I flatten these views into quick descriptive cartoons, even though many fictional or popular history treatments offer more nuance, for the purposes of at least inviting key actors, events, and artifacts into the picture while acknowledging that they come laden with many rounds of prior treatments. I have intentionally chosen the list above not as artifacts purely of myth, but as quite durable, material artifacts within that landscape. Indeed, many of these will continue to have real salience in any landscape description I might manage to produce.

Landscape and "the view"

To return to MacPhail, her work situates the specific buyout executed by the Assynt Crofter's Trust, the first successfully completed community buyout, within the context of post-colonial theory, particularly Indian feminist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work on speech-acts and subalternity. In order to unpack this, MacPhail draws on Womack's tracing of the construction of the mythical Highlands, and it serves my purposes very well to follow her closely through this argument.

With regard to nature, the change from a Renaissance assumption of living by the principles of nature and *in* nature to "the absolute and dynamic polarity of Nature on the one hand and, on the other hand 'us'." which occurs by the late 18th century is instructive. This separation is of a particular kind and can include in nature people and customs of the countryside as well as flora and fauna – rocks and burns but also ancient monuments. This separation sets up a binary opposition around core and periphery. (MacPhail 2002, 129)

MacPhail here is quoting Womack, and both see the Nature/"us" binary as instructive in the understanding of the imposition of and resistance to "landscape" and of mythical

understanding of the Highlands. MacPhail follows Womack further to the idea of "Improvement," a series of steps taken to bring "Nature" (here including both landscape and Othered people living in it) into alignment with "reason and freedom," as provisioned by the cosmopolitan, learned European elite, which Womack represents via a narrative on nature from Friedrich Schiller.

Strikingly, the analysis produced here by Womack in understanding the construction of the Highland myth, used by MacPhail to provide grounding for a post-colonial understanding of land struggle and land reform in the Highlands, traces processes almost identical to Bruno Latour's "modern constitution" in the modernist rationale for scientific fact production. The "constitution," in Latour's model, starts with two movements of purification. The first, an "internal" purification by which the modern analysis cleanly separates "Nature" from "Society," while the second, an "external" purification, separates "us" (the modernized) who perform this separation from "the other" for whom Nature and Society are still co-mingled. (Latour 1989, p99) In addition from producing the "modernist constitution," Latour argues that these two purported purifications achieved by Western modernity create an "import-export system" which allows the modern West to apply this "absolute and dynamic polarity" (in Womack's words) to the business of asserting its superiority to any other system it encounters (Latour 1989, 97-98).

Here again, though, Latour's construction (largely based on his own movement from ethnography in Africa to ethnography at the Salk Institute), modernity's internal-external move is from Western Europe to places that were explicitly formal colonies. Post-colonial signifiers continue to appear in this locale where adopting entirely post-colonial language ignores the historical and ongoing role that people from the Highlands and Islands played

in British colonialism as well as the considerable benefits they receive from being citizens of one of the home nations of the UK. A crude geographical delimiting of the colony and the capital here will remain insufficient; in order to understand coloniality in this tension between a mythical view of the landscape on the one hand and the land and local people on the other, I turn first to a series of interventions from feminism.

Feminism and the more-than-human landscape

When the North Lochinver Estate was placed on the market in a sale in which it was to eventually be bought by the Assynt Crofters Trust as the first successful open market community trust buyout in Scotland, the sales brochure for the estate included the following indelible text describing the estate:

“One need only enter Assynt to see the great sphinx-like mass of Suilven to sense the atmosphere of unreality, almost fantasy, which permeates even the character of the people who live there. Mountains such as Quinag, Canisp, Ben More Assynt, Cul Mor, Cul Beag, Stack Polly and Conival all have the immense power to impress, and all serve to emphasise that man himself is perhaps the alien element in this landscape.” (John Clegg and Co. 1992 in MacPhail 2002, 273, emphases mine)

MacPhail does considerable interpretation on this rather fertile text. She contrasts, on the one hand, reflections from those who were active in organizing the Assynt Crofters Trust buyout who were furious with the brochure's implication of an empty or "alien" landscape, and on the other hand, comments from a realtor at the agency which published the brochure who saw nothing wrong with the quote. Whereas Spivak raises the question "can the subaltern speak?" to address the difficulty of the subaltern to be heard in a postcolonial context, MacPhail interprets the disconnect between what is heard by Trust activists and the real estate agent as a failure of a speech act of dissent.

MacPhail further comments on the way in which the people living in Assynt are merged down into Nature, before "man himself" is set aside as different and alien:

. . . 'Nature' here includes all human life. But this human life is waif like and not fully present – for sale is perhaps a little Brigadoon. There is also at work a newer idea of Nature, which is Nature as separate from the human cultural world, and the notion that human presence is an inappropriate intrusion into the scenery or landscape. An aesthetic taste for empty places and pristine sites which are graded today for conservation measures – pristine and untouched by human effort is Grade 1. There is a strong sense that this 'place' or bit of land which is for sale is in a parallel universe or a very different time zone – unreal, fantasy, not real – and entails the opposite of the everyday and practical. This, to a great extent, is what the potential buyer is being encouraged to buy or to gain access to.

Beyond MacPhail's reading of this, I am also struck by the use of the twice-gendered "man himself" in what is the "alien element." While such a construction is often dismissed as grammatical anachronism, with the use of "man" as shorthand for all of humankind, it must be noticed that the writer of the text designated the locals as "the people who live there" rather than "the men who live there." So on the one hand, there are the "people" who live in Assynt, along with the fantastic and unreal character that has permeated them from the very atmosphere of the place, while on the other hand there is "man himself" arriving as stranger and other.

I draw this out not merely for close reading of this text, but to make it an object lesson of a broader point. In her essay on theory in the built landscape, Elizabeth Meyer notes that "We should be skeptical of discourses that assign a gender affiliation to the landscape-- implicitly or explicitly. The implicit affiliations are manifest as 'female'--the 'other' who is seen but not heard." (Meyer 2002, p168) While this text does not explicitly make the landscape female, as Meyer notes is often the case, it is again the twice-gendered "man himself" set apart as alien, while the landscape, atmosphere, and "people" who are part of the neutral landscape. Along the same lines articulated by Latour, Haraway notices the split

between "Heroic," Aristotelian, self-moving "man" and the collection of nonhuman actants around him, including in Haraway's words, "most white women, people of color, the sick, and others with reduced powers of self-direction compared to the One True Copy of the Prime Mover." (Haraway 1994, 65) To this list, perhaps we can add the crofters, cottars, and other residents of Assynt, at least in the language of the globalized real estate market.

Northwest Scotland and Community Owned Estates: A Geography

With this partial perspective in mind, I here take the visible aspects of landscape as the starting point for this inquiry. In this section, I detail the dominant visible aspects of landscape. Through their explication, I examine the historical, social, and ecological processes that continue to reproduce the dynamic landscape as it exists today and from which the contemporary community ownership movement has emerged.

The Lords of the Isles and the Ghàidhealtachd

Many supporters and commentators of the contemporary land reform movement insist the effort is a continuation of centuries of land struggle and an act of de-colonization. As such, it is worth picking up the historical geography of the region in the period before modern colonization. The community buyout movement began very much in the spaces known generally in Scottish Gaelic as the *Ghàidhealtachd* (usually loosely translated as the "highlands" but literally in Gaelic, "the place of the Gaels"). In both the eras of an independent Lord of the Isles, as well as after 1493 when the region was consolidated into Scotland as a whole, the primary currency of local political economy could be crudely

generalized as land for occupation and cultivation. Land control was contested between clans and families, within whose holdings a system of allocation.

A clan's wealth ultimately depended upon the amount of productive territory under its control, but productivity was measured in terms of social value rather than surplus export. Land was necessary for growing crops and grazing livestock which fed the men who defended these lands and sought to expand their holdings. Clans could acquire new land peaceably by marriage or royal favour, or forcibly by conquest. (Newton 2009, 141)

It would be a mistake to characterize the tenure and land allocation system in the 18th century highlands as a kind of pristine ancient system encountering the first touches of modernization. History, after all, was not on pause in the highlands (or anywhere else) during this period. However, the set of tenure and usufruct land allocation arrangements which was generally referred to as the *runrig* system had very old roots and concepts which had aged and evolved over centuries. Generally speaking, clan chiefs with extensive claims to highland land allocated subsections of those claims to "tacksmen" who were charged with the allocation of farming responsibilities to a subset of tenants. The best stretches of farmland were divided into a series of "rigs" of a range of sizes and quality which were then assigned on an annual basis to tenant households for farming. Particularly skilled and able households were granted larger and more productive rigs, while households which might be aging or otherwise declining in their ability to work the land could be re-allocated to smaller plots. Lands deemed less suitable for cultivation or grazing (largely by cows at the time) were allocated for housing.

As Wightman (2011, p70-72) notes, this system of *dùthaich* was raised in Scottish Parliament in 2009 as a possible indigenous land tenure system in the wake of the 1999 Mabo case in Australia. In that legal decision, indigenous systems of tenure were recognized as formally unceded and thereby superior to the subsequently imposed imperial system of

land tenure, which treated all of Australia as *terra nullis* and thereby lacking any system of tenure. *Dùthaich* has never received any formal recognition in modern courts, in part because the contemporary system of private ownership dismantled it through the position of clan chief through royal edicts starting from the 16th century. Reforms under King James VI of Scotland (King James I of England) had required formal title for land ownership and placed that title in the hands of the clan chiefs, transforming them into landlords. Laws requiring education and primogeniture in estate inheritance narrowed the field further. Primogeniture laws forced estates to pass undivided to a single male heir, while the education restrictions demanded that any heir be educated in Edinburgh and London in order to hold title to land. These effectively alienated what had been a local cultural position of chief into an often absentee relationship of landlord. (Wightman 2011, p46 and p265)

Crofts and sheep

Few elements of the landscape are either as emblematic of or as idiosyncratic to these spaces as the croft, and few arrangements are as important or as confounding to the unfamiliar observer as the economic and legal arrangements associated with crofting. I here attempt a brief overview of the history of the emergence of the crofting system and the croft as a physical artifact of this long process of emergence. For the sake of brevity, some terms and arrangements will go underexplored in this narrative.

Briefly, crofting is a system of mixed small form agriculture arranged on the landscape in a series of plots large enough to allow for some subsistence agriculture with perhaps a small amount of surplus available for sale, but not enough for a typical household to survive on without external labor, usually with the tenant in residence on the plot itself. Due to a series

of land struggles, particularly in the late 19th century, crofters now have negligible rents as well as largely permanent tenure on their crofts. Crofts are almost always arranged into "crofting townships," which are arrangements of a small number (some times as few as a half dozen) of crofts clustered together with a nearby allocation of common grazings.

Crofting Beginnings

The arrival of two new forms of economic production drove major changes in the allocation of land, beginning the first wave of of the forced tenant migrations generally known as the Highland Clearances. The major driver was the introduction of the cheviot breed of sheep to the highlands. Pastured livestock had previously consisted largely of cattle, but with demand for wool military uniforms driving profits from sheep farming higher, highland landlords quickly set about re-organizing their lands. Sheep farming required larger stretches of pasture to allow for the bigger herds required to extract the increased profits. This, however, often required removing people from their houses as well as their rigs in order to consolidate large enough pastures. These movements created both a population to whom landlords were required to supply housing and land as well as an available labor force from which they could further extract profits.

In the late 18th century, the process of kelp harvesting, long practiced by highland horticulturalists for the purpose of enriching soil for cultivation, grew in importance as a source of alkali for industrial processes, particularly soapmaking. Enterprising and modernization-minded landlords began to make plans to re-allocate land away from the *runrig* system with an eye towards pushing their tenants more into kelp harvesting for export. To accomplish this, lands into "crofts" for some displaced tenants, sometimes along

the same lines that had previously defined the rigs. In contrast to the *runrig* system, crofts were assigned permanently to a single household who was given either a single standing house on the croft itself or the rights to construct one. In the highland landscape where slopes, often steep ones, descend quickly from higher ground to the seashore, borders between crofts usually run perpendicular to topographic lines. This arrangement grants each croft small amounts of land in a range of soil conditions as well as a small amount of shoreline. The shoreline in particular was critical to the aims of landlords to gain increased rent revenue from their tenants. As Hunter notes,

Newly established crofters, it was realised, might not willingly take to a life of kelping and fishing. They were to be forced into it, therefore, by the simple expedient of ensuring that no new croft could provide its tenant with an agricultural return large enough to afford an adequate living for himself and his family. Crofts were thus laid out in places where they did 'not interfere with, or mar, the laying out of better farms' and on boggy and rocky land in 'the least profitable parts of the estate.' (Hunter 2010, 54)

The latter part of this quote requires understanding an important distinction between "crofts" and "farms." Farms, in the parlance of highland land, refer to larger agglomerations of land where agriculture for market sale is practiced, and conform more closely to the by then well established forms of farms in England, lowland Scotland, and other parts of Europe. Further, in addition to crofters and farmers, an additional class of wholly unlanded residents emerged, known as "cottars." Cottars generally paid rents for housing but had no land to work, and were entirely dependent upon wage labor, and as such, occupied the most tenuous position in the new arrangement of land use and allocation.



Cheviot sheep grazing on Kildonan Farm on Eigg

Clearances and the Land Struggle in the 19th Century

Although crofts were first created by profit-minded landlords, crofts and crofting became central elements in land struggle for the next century. As Hunter notes above, their original purpose was to produce a precarious population dependent upon economic activity geared towards southern markets. Increasingly, however, landlords saw the indigenous population on their rural estates as hindrances to profit and value production, rather than as a people to be served or even an economic asset. While sheep farming was the initial impetus for the clearances, the emergence of the hunting estate, discussed in further detail below, also drove the desire by landlords to reduce population on their estates. Clearances took a wide range of different forms, from relatively benign monetary incentives to emigrate to British colonies to the brutal one hour notices of eviction, which were followed closely by

ruining houses by burning or otherwise destroying their roofs. Highlanders and islanders steadily departed not just to the colonies but to the growing industrial cities of Britain, particularly Glasgow.

Landlords perpetuated Clearances throughout northwest Scotland, particularly in the northern estates owned by the Duke of Sutherland, in punctuated episodes throughout the 19th century. The potato blights that more famously produced famines in Ireland also heavily impacted Scottish crofters and cottars in the 1840s and 1850s. A few somewhat more economically prosperous economic period in the subsequent decade ended abruptly in the early 1880s with a collapse in wool prices, herring prices, and a series of weather-related catastrophes. Crofters and cottars who had previously been able to assemble somewhat stable livings were suddenly facing stark poverty and starvation. Simultaneously, the drop in wool prices led tenant sheep farmers to abandon farming tenancies. This only sped the degree to which landlords attempted to capitalize on the rise in popularity of hunting estates by converting estates to deer forests for elite hunting. Desperation, frustration with seeing usable land go fallow, and inspiration from the example of the Irish Land League led to a series of rent strikes in the early 1880s. The national government responded to growing unrest by appointing the Napier Commission, which produced a report based on testimony from crofters, among others. The Commission's recommendations were summarily ignored by Prime Minister Gladstone's government, until a further series of land raids and rent strikes generated enough pressure to produce the Crofters Act of 1886. Among other provisions, the act's most dramatic provision established permanent, irrevocable tenancy for crofters so long as they worked their crofts. A set of subsequent actions, particularly a raid by landless cottars on the Pairc deer forest on Lewis, drove the passage of an additional

series of Parliamentary acts which provided for further croft creation and the governance of common grazings (Hunter 2010).



Bracken fern grows around ruined foundations in the cleared township of Lower Grulin on Eigg

The legacy of the Clearances is still highly visible throughout much of northwest Scotland. In places like the Upper and Lower Grulin townships on Eigg, now part of the Sandevor farm, extant stone foundations dot the landscape in areas that are now sheep pasture. Ulva's coastline includes, almost at the high tide line on one promontory, ruined foundations from a row of small houses reportedly built by cleared residents with nowhere to go. Local vernacular history refers to the site as "Starvation Point."

Contemporary crofting

As noted above, few landforms are as emblematic of the Scottish landscape as the croft, which emerges in this inventory as both a remarkably dynamic but also conservative institution. This is perhaps to be expected of an institution which emerged slowly, starting with an intentional introduction of precarity, but which in the wake of the Crofting Wars and subsequent land reform and crofters rights bills, has become among the most sure means of securing stability of tenure. Themes of crofting and security are intricately tied up in the history of the land reform, with the land reform-oriented Scottish Crofters Union helping to create the circumstances which made the formation of the Assynt Crofters Trust possible (MacPhail 2002, 287). The single most central leader across the scope of the Eigg buyout and community ownership era, Maggie Fyffe, was only able to stay on the island through the elongated buyout process because of her household's ability to obtain a crofting tenancy, preventing the landlord from evicting them. Crofting townships still define the predominant settlement pattern across major swaths of the landscapes in these communities today, with the outlines of crofting tenancies still appearing on maps where they were laid out to facilitate access to kelp harvests. Long thin lines of fences or rocks often remain visible along the boundaries between crofts.



Croft boundaries are visible across Loch Erisort. Photo taken from Ravenspoint at Kershader on the Pairc Estate

The security of crofting, and the somewhat byzantine set of regulations involving the disposition of those tenancies, may continue to plague attempts at community regeneration or economic transition. The durability of crofting tenure relies on it being actively worked or used, but these requirements are unclear and unevenly enforced. Family heritability of crofts and lax or uneven enforcement of requirements for residency and "working the croft" mean that people living in other countries continue to hold crofting tenancies despite never living locally. In the absence of formal enforcement of crofting regulations, informal relationships may be of greater importance in securing tenure. As a couple in Assynt responded:

Interviewer: Do you have any concerns about tenure security with your croft . . . ?

Respondent 1: No, I don't. No, I don't think so, I think because – because I'm part of the community, I'm part of – I'm part of the trust, but I don't feel that – but then it – it

all depends on who is running the trust at the time. It changes depending on who's behind the scenes.

Respondent 2: I mean, I . . . I don't think the trust is particularly proactive . . . Well, management and the fact that where there are, um – what's the bloody word – absentee tenants.

Respondent 1: Yeah, there's a – because the Crofters' Commission, they're still involved in crofting law, and anytime that there's a problem, they tend to kind of back the problem – back and forward to – you know, well, it's the commission that sorts that out. Oh, it's the Crofters' Trust that sorts that out. When – so you don't always know who's actually supposed to be –

Interviewer: And what kind of problems? So, you talked about absentee –

Respondent 1: Yeah, um, that my ex – well, husband – is the name that's on my croft. The croft's in his name. He moved abroad eight years ago. He went back to Dubai eight years ago, but the croft is in his name. Um, and I've spoken to the commission and asked them about having it transferred to me, and they said no, they can't do that. Um, and I spoke to the Crofters' Trust.

Interviewer: Would your – would your husband sign a paper?

Respondent 1: He wouldn't do it. He wouldn't do it. . . . Even though he's been away for eight years, even though it's quite a distance of so many –

Respondent 2: Fifteen miles.

Respondent 1: Fifteen miles. You have to live with 15 miles of your croft. He's slightly over that.

The provision and enforcement of "sumings"—allocations for number of animals permitted per croft on common grazing lands—is similarly uneven, perhaps unproblematically so as most common grazings remain well under their designated count of livestock. Additionally, processes by which rights to crofts may be transferred make an understanding of local property dynamics opaque to those not intimately involved in it. Thatcher-era reforms allow for an individual crofting right-to-buy, meaning crofts may transfer to private ownership, but in many instances they still retain status as crofts with rights to common grazings. As an interviewee in Assynt explains:

Interviewer: What happens, what would you say happens to the land once it gets sold? If a land is taken out of crofting and then sold on –

Respondent: Well, it's not necessarily taken out of crofting. It remains a croft. It's just that it's been sold and is under new ownership. But it's still a croft. So you can have an owner-occupier. If a person comes to live on a croft, they can be an owner-

occupier rather than a tenant. And you do have to use a croft. You can't just buy the croft and abandon it and be an absentee landlord. I think you have to use it or sublet it to somebody else or have an informal agreement where they can – someone else can use it. But it has to be used.

Interviewer: And what qualifies as use?

Respondent: Exactly.

Interviewer: Oh.

Respondent: Yeah.

Portions of crofts large enough for houses may be "de-crofted" from the surrounding croft while also retaining crofting tenancy, largely for the purposes of obtaining private mortgage bank loans. Finally, crofts may be assigned or leased, including to other crofters, such that many active crofters now are grazing sheep or other livestock on multiple crofts in addition to the common grazings, taking advantage of the combined sumings to overcome the original institutional design of preventing crofting from providing full-time employment.



*Images from a single croft on the Assynt Crofters Trust. 1) Grazing areas inside the croft (inbye land) are in the foreground, with common grazings behind them. 2) A vegetable garden abuts inbye grazing, with structures for protecting against deer browse. 3) A rowan tree (*Sorbus aucuparia*), traditionally planted close to the house in the Highlands, grows behind a stone wall. 4) Vegetables grow in a plastic greenhouse (locally referred to as a "poly tunnel") 5) Beehives sit on the edge of the croft. 6) A small greenhouse or conservatory attached to the main croft house adjoins the main exterior garden area next to the house.*

Changing forms of production on crofts

Sheep grazing now provides many crofters with their most reliable form of income. However, while the technical definition of the term "crofting" is restricted to the complex tenure arrangements, in Scottish vernacular it typically refers to a collection of forms of production which were common across most crofting areas in the mid- to late-20th century. Along with sheep, most crofters would keep dairy cattle for their own dairy supplies, including butter. House fires were often fueled by peat cut from bogs on common grazing land, a task which was often done collectively. In the inbye land, crofters typically grew oats, potatoes, and basic vegetables as well as keeping chickens, with many supplemented with mixtures of other uses such as fruit trees or beehives. To supplement grazing in winter, many crofters would grow and cut hay. One crofter in Assynt told me about how many of these forms of production were disappearing.

I mean usually traditionally sheep will be grazing or cows will be grazing. It's very difficult, arable; nobody plowing up the land and sowing things. Nobody is even making hay. I tried making hay with various degrees of success. It's very hard work. If you get the weather, it's fine, and if you don't, it's a disaster. So yeah, most of the crofts are just sheep, just grazing.

There is a historical irony in the degree to which, particularly in communities like Assynt and Pairc, crofting has come to be synonymous with raising sheep, when the original historical impetus for the creation of crofts was largely to separate the local population from lands designated for sheep farming. In my interviews, I heard similar responses as Katrina Myrvang Brown, with newer crofters attempting to introduce more diverse forms of agriculture, including livestock, encountering resistance and resentment from older crofters who insisted that sheep farming has "just been standard practice since the year dot. It hasn't changed." (Brown 2007, 638) Despite these frustrations, the concept of crofting received

support almost universally from community-based respondents that commented on it. The following comment, from a more newly established crofter, was generally typical:

The crofting system is fantastic. It's abused, and, uh, not supported, and et cetera, et cetera, but I think the croft system should be shipped out there, you know. People don't need to own land. They just need access to land.

As such, community trusts have moved to the fore in opening the institution of crofting to new forms of production. The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust has granted several new crofting tenancies, including a household which established a business on the croft raising willow twigs and weaving them into baskets and other woven willow goods for sale. North West Mull Community Woodland Company has created and granted six new "forest crofts," where the new tenants were just beginning to establish new forms of work and production on their lands at the time of my fieldwork visit.

In addition to new forms of agricultural production, including silviculture and less conventional livestock such as goats or pigs, many crofters have turned to maintaining vacation rentals as a source of income.

Bacon: There's a number of – there's a growth in vacation houses in the area. What would you say is driving that?

Respondent: Just the beautiful area itself.

Interviewer: The area?

Respondent: The landscape.

Interviewer: Does that happen on crofting land or does that happen on – what is the land that is turning into vacation homes? And was that land part of the buyout?

Respondent: Yes, it's all, nearly all been part of the buyout. There were crofts that were already owned or, or obviously houses in the gardens and not in the buyout. The actual crofts and the common grazing. From time to time – see, you can have up to three house sites on a croft if it's big enough. So somebody might live on a croft, their own house and garden. And then they'll de-croft another weed patch and sell it as a house site. So there's various ways. So somebody might buy the plot and build their own home. Or the person who has the house originally might build another house and let it out and sells. Or if a little tiny cottar's house or something comes up for sale, a local person might buy that and let it out, self-catering. There's various routes to how it comes about.

Interviewer: What is the impact of increasing vacation homes in the area?

Respondent: Well, it's hard to say exactly. It's stopping young people getting a house because they're selling it at vast prices. You know, over 200,000 pounds. And I don't think a young local couple is going to be able to afford that. So does it make a difference to youngsters getting a house? It's easy to say yes. The holiday makers are buying up all the houses. But I don't know if they really are stopping a youngster getting a house. The difference comes in the winter, when half the houses are empty. So there's just less people in the area to keep shops going and stuff. And for everything there's less people in the area. In some townships it's 50/50 at the moment; 50 percent holiday houses.

Once again in this quote, "the view" and "the landscape" make an appearance, and again as in the Assynt sales brochure they are associated with remote financial interests arriving and landing on the ground. Holiday rentals provide many crofters with substantial additional income, but they also accelerate the transition away from agricultural production, particularly collective ones. Further, by moving land and houses from the traditional system of croft allocation to the private market, younger local residents are often priced out by people retiring to the area. Additionally, the re-introduction of individualized, market-centric land ownership into crofting areas appear again be implicated in this transition. While vacation rentals are becoming increasingly common, in many parts of Scotland (including in tourism heavy cities such as Edinburgh), in crofting areas this may be in part driven by the individual crofting right-to-buy.

Interviewees involved in community trust leadership broadly identified the individual right to buy as a problem with crofting and the establishment of new crofts in particular. Recent legislation in Scotland has allowed landlords, including trusts, to establish new crofts with the individual right-to-buy removed. Leaders of the Assynt Foundation cited the right as a reason that an attempt to establish new crofts on Foundation land was abandoned, all of which happened before the update in legislation that allowed for restricting it. The

following respondent, who has a position both as a director of the North West Mull trust and a leadership position with Community Land Scotland, commented on the six new woodland crofts created on Mull:

Interviewer: What role has the establishment of crofts played in giving support for the project?

Respondent: Quite significant I think, because it was seen as being a way of encouraging people to put roots down, and more particularly from our point of view it gave people a security of tenure on somewhere for people that couldn't actually afford to buy somewhere. So you say well here is eight acres, or nine acres, or ten acres of land, it's croft land. It's got to be A, B, C, or D, but you can use it as a base for your business. You can use it as a place to put a house or whatever. It gave people a space and a stake in the landscape, which is theirs, I mean the crofting tenure is just that. And unless they're silly boys and girls it's theirs or in their family forever. And we did modify the crofting tenure so that they don't have a right to buy. . . . it's permitted on new crofts to exclude the right to buy. So we did, because again if we hadn't then we would have people saying I want a croft. Then three months putting it on the market, realizing X thousand pound for it, and saying thank you very much.

Interviewer: Or put a vacation rental on it.

Respondent: Which would have not gone down well with the rest of the community, so we excluded the right to buy. And we're restricting the right to assign it as well to spouse, child, or oh, that other relative. But we insisted, we made it clear that it can only legally stay in the family. 'Cause there is too many crofts in the western isles that are owned by Great Aunt Maude three times removed who lives in Canada. And is never going to come back, and has got no interest in it, but nobody else can use it.

Themes of crofting will continue to re-emerge in later chapters, particularly the way in which traditionally collective enterprises have shaped community, and how those are changing.

The Lodge

Just as crofting as a landscape form emerges primarily from the introduction of cheviot sheep and kelp harvesting, the large mansions, lodges, castles, and other dwellings built for private owners date from a particular period in which non-local elites began to see highland

estates as a space for leisure. This era may be most popularly symbolized by the purchase of the Balmoral estate in 1848 by Prince Albert and the construction of the new royal residence in 1856 for elite enjoyment of the Scottish countryside. As profits declined from large scale sheep farming, landlords looking to parlay their Scottish holdings into wealth and status further south began to look to providing elite escapes in the Scottish countryside. With imperial-driven wealth growing in England and in the Scottish urban central belt, along with the valorization of the "country life" outside of the UK's booming industrial centers, a well appointed highland escape promised an array of bucolic activities, including fishing, horseback riding, strolls in well-tended gardens, country dances, and above all, deer stalking (hunting) (Wightman 2011, p165).

As Wightman notes,

The nouveau-riche class of emergent landed proprietors built lodges and houses, pushed roads into the glens, constructed paths for the passage of hunters and ponies (to extract deer carcasses), built boundary fences, devised and implemented new game management techniques and passed new laws to embed the new regime by entrenching hunting rights. As a consequence, a triumphant new cultural formation took hold – the highland sporting estate. (Wightman 2011, 165)

The 19th century thereby saw both a mass acquisition of land by southern buyers eager to establish themselves in the landed gentry as well as a longer-established landowners, some deriving their status as claimants of the inheritance of clan chiefs, converting their properties into deer estates. By 1904 nearly 3 million acres in Scotland were dedicated to hunting estates (Wightman 2011, 165). And as Wightman notes above, at the center of many of these estates emerged "the lodge" or "the big house."

These structures in some cases served as the laird's full-time residence, but more often were secondary residences to which they returned some fraction of the year.

Some, such as Amhuinnsuidhe on the North Harris Estate, took (and fully deserved, in form) the name of "castle." Fiona MacKenzie writes about the estate:

In view of the pivotal importance of the castle in the deliberations of community purchase over 100 years later, it is perhaps interesting to note that it was the extravagance of the seventh earl in building Amhuinnsuidhe that led to the break-up of the Harris estate, which at that time included the whole island. Finding the castle he had built at Aird a'Mhulaidh to be an unsatisfactory base for his hunting pursuits, the earl had built the much larger castle of Amhuinnsuidhe. However, or so the story told locally goes, his new wife, Gertrude, a daughter of the Earl of Leicester, was unimpressed, likening the castle in size to her father's stables. Not to be outdone, her husband added another wing to the castle, a move that pushed him into bankruptcy and the sale of North Harris to Sir Edward Scott, a London banker, in 1868. (MacKenzie 2013, 56-57)

This particular anecdote, even if embellished by locals, in a few short lines by MacKenzie brings forth a number of themes which recur in the dynamics around these lodges, the ways in which the estates as a whole were deployed by landowners during the emergence of the hunting estate, and how they ultimately ended up in the realm of a larger, globalized and financialized land market. Notably, the value of the hunting estate, to the landowner, is not solely that of his personal leisure in the pursuit of hunting. The hunting lodge, castle, or main house, therefore, is not just the seat of the laird when in residence, but the spatial site at which the landowner attempts to parlay his ownership of the estate into tangible or intangible currencies of the capital. In this instance, the earl found himself entered into a competition with his father-in-law, and in an attempt to meet the competition, bankrupted the estate and lost his newly built castle to a banker in London.



Amuinnsuidhe, Isle of Harris, 2016

Hence, in this moment of controversy at the point of construction of the castle, three distinct but tightly intertwined forces can be seen arriving and being translated both in material space and in ownership. First, perhaps most obviously, we have the simple story of the earl fearing being outdone by his father-in-law in the eyes of his wife, desperate to make his Scottish estate live up to the grander palaces of England. The anecdote works as a silly story, but it would hardly be unprecedented for scale and grandeur of leisure palaces to be the source of deeper political competition over social and cultural production, as the implicit competition between King Louis XIV and his finance minister Fouquet over their respective palaces at Versailles and Vaux showed. In the case of the Harris estate, the earl was likely not assembling gardeners, artists, and poets as Fouquet did at Vaux, but in most instances hunting lodges were built to grand scale to allow one to fete, charm, and otherwise entertain ones peers with the full experience paraded at Balmoral in pursuit of status.

In this case, we see it mediated through the view of Gertrude over whether her husband can materially demonstrate himself to be an equal patriarch to her father. As a result, Ahmuinnsuidhe the castle lands on the site of Ahmuinnsuidhe the previously brutally cleared township. Its arrival establishes a colony of elite leisure in place of the distasteful poverty, with the former residents entirely unwanted except in small numbers at the servants' gate. And in the last act, the finances required to produce this work in the Scottish baronial style overwhelm whatever benefit of societal status or assembly of peers was hoped for, and the form of the banker takes control, to finally truly place ownership firmly in the hands of the finances of the capital in London. Patriarchal competition, colonial displacement, and financial capitalization now leave the land, arriving in the 21st century, cleared of its former residents and with an excessively large hunting castle sitting on its shores.

From further north, on Lewis, we have a story of greater success of such a hunting lodge in assembling an elite set of visitors. Alastair MacIntosh, who would go on to be a founding board member of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, writes in his book on land reform of his childhood as the local doctor's son and getting invited to the Eisken estate with his father.

From an entry in his childhood diary, MacIntosh recounts:

I recorded the following entry on 31 August 1966: "I went out to play with Derek and Donald. I did not have much time because my mother was having guests. When the guests arrived I opened the doors for them. My mother had told me that the man who had come was in place of the Queen in New Zealand." In other words, this was the Lord or Viscount Cobham of Hagley Hall, the Governor-General. (MacIntosh 2001, 11)

From an enthusiastic 1992 article from *Harpers & Queen* on "our Highland playgrounds," MacIntosh finds copy describing summer life for the "Old Guard British" at the hunting lodge:

There's nothing like Scotland in August for sheer expenditure of physical energy; the grouse moor, the deer and the salmon river claim the chaps during the day, who then heave a lot of whisky down, change into kilt (if they qualify), evening tails (if they don't) and go reeling until dawn with the wind-burnt girls adept at quick changes from muddy tweeds to ballgowns and tartan sashes. There's . . . Nothing like Scotland for stalking the biggest social game. (MacIntosh 2001, 81)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this view was not fully shared by those who lived around the houses. On the day of the handover to community ownership, I spoke with a man who had lived on Ulva as a child. As we walked past the big house I asked him about it.

Bacon: So did you ever come over to the big house?

Murray: Um, this afternoon I just went in, actually

Bacon: So when you were a kid would you come over here at all?

Murray: On Halloween . . . we came over guising, or trick or treating they call it in America. We came then, and the lady who owned it, Lady Pembleton, she would invite the children as far as I can remember from Ulva Ferry Primary School once a year to come for the day and visit, yeah.

Bacon: And other than that it was you just didn't come over here much

Murray: Because there was no reason to really. It feels like uh, someone earlier described it, going into the big house, going into it were like uh, a quiet revolution in a way, you know.

Bacon: Of the big house being empty?

Bacon: Well just people taking over and walking in.

Lodges and gardens

Few spaces or component landscapes mark out the change in ownership regime from private to community like the lodges or big houses, most originating in the golden era of the Highland hunting estate, from mid-19th through the mid-20th century. The lodges served not just as seats for leisure for their owners, but as sites for entertaining and establishing social ties with the wealthy and powerful. In the late 20th century and early 21st century, these houses formed the centerpieces of sales brochures for multi-million pound prices for the estates, and at the moments of sale, these narratives are pushed emphasizing these castles and mansions as the "jewel in the crown" of these estates.

Under community ownership, however, a very different picture of these houses emerges. As one long-time leader in community ownership told me, the first thing any community trust looks to do is sell off its lodge, as the maintenance and upkeep on them become extraordinarily time consuming and expensive, and the prospects for revenue from them remain low. This is readily apparent in a survey of the fate of houses on estates now under community ownership. Amhuinnsuidhe was jettisoned by the community trust, which saw it as an albatross to manage. The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust sold the architecturally significant Achamore House (which included probable early work by Charles Rennie Mackintosh) for well over half of the price they paid to purchase the island estate in the first place. The house has since been on the market for over 8 years, now at a listing price less than half what the purchaser initially paid to the trust. On Eigg, the mid-20th century lodge sat empty and abandoned for several years before being taken on by a sustainability-minded couple who have spent years renovating it using local, natural materials, with the assistance of volunteer labor from visitors who come to take courses in various aspects of sustainable living.



The old lodge on Eigg, now the Earth Connections Eco-Centre

The disposal of houses and lodges has not been universal, however. On Ulva, trust owners have not placed Ulva House on the market, but have applied for grant funding to convert it into a museum and interpretation center, along with offices for trust staff and a subsection for holiday accommodations. The Assynt Foundation retained Glencanisp Lodge and rented it as a whole hunting lodge for several years before a locally based couple took it over and converted it into a bed and breakfast, making it the most consistently profitable operation the Foundation has currently underway.



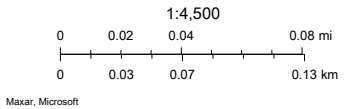
Uloa House, taken on the date of transfer to community ownership.

Often in interviews with residents regarding important spaces and ongoing efforts on the estates, the houses and lodges disappeared from the conversation entirely. Residents would discuss in detail efforts surrounding farms, scenic spaces, roads, and, as discussed above, public toilets, but these large residences, once the center of economic and political activity on the estates, would almost never arise in conversation, or if they did, it was as a headache or frustration to be dealt with.

Eigg Detail: Old Lodge and Community Hall Area



5/26/2021



Michael T. Bacon



Palm trees line the driveway up to the old lodge on Eigg, taken from the front lawn of the lodge, towards the main gate and onwards to the pier. Despite Eigg's typically cold Scottish climate, temperatures rarely go below freezing, allowing palm trees to survive for decades.

Notably a different, at times opposite shift appears common regarding the immediate grounds and gardens that surround these houses and lodges. Often as products of the botanical explorations of the late British Empire, many of these gardens were planted with a wide variety of exotic plants, many of which still grow there today. Particularly in the Inner Hebrides, living, healthy palm trees continue to grow, albeit slowly, on the grounds around

the old lodges. Flowering rhododendron dot the grounds around the lodge on Eigg, and Achamore Gardens on Gigha remains celebrated for its azalea collection. The trajectory of maintenance and care on these grounds is at times contrary to that of the houses. In the case of Eigg and Gigha, the gardens were planted originally decades ago by a past landlord. Often in the hands of subsequent owners, the gardens were neglected or abandoned while the house or lodge was maintained. After transferring to community ownership, these gardens become spaces of pride, which become the subject of volunteer restoration efforts, including tending and retaining rare non-native ornamentals. On Ulva, the gardens around Ulva House had become overgrown, and among the first projects undertaken by volunteer community efforts in the wake of the buyout was a recovery and tending of these gardens. At the time of fieldwork, the Assynt Foundation was exploring converting a ruined walled garden behind Glencanisp Lodge into garden plots for local primary school students.





Ruined walled garden behind the lodge at Glencanisp on Assynt Foundation land. Subsequent to the taking of this photo, the garden has been restored. The green roofed pole barn is in the background.

Common grazings, forests, and bogs

Outside of these garden areas and the directly cultivated or managed species of farms and crofts, ownership and management regimes continue to produce different and changing systems of human activity and landscape forms. A full accounting of all of the dynamics I encountered in just the estates and component landscapes I focused on would fill a dissertation on its own, but a few common themes and notable moments of controversy merit discussion here.

Bracken fern, a tall, toxic native fern species which often invades pastureland, signifies an ongoing slow conflict on the land. While regular grazing will keep the bracken at bay largely due to animal trample, a drop in grazing will allow the plant to move into pasture. This generates a potential risk to livestock due to the fern's toxicity as well as a decrease in available food as the ferns shade out better grazing species. Recovery of fallow pasture in crofting areas often involves a communal "bracken beat," where the effort of hacking back the fern to re-open the pasture is shared collectively.

High levels of grazing, on the other hand, produce a very low cropped grassland, as sheep eat grasses and heathers at very young stages. Many sheep-raising crofters consider this the preferred state of pasture, continually providing sheep with the more tender "new bite." The result of the intensive graze, however, is often to prevent the full development of still-extant wildflowers, and often leaves roots at a development state where on sandy soil the ground below weathers away, giving these sheep pastures the look of golf putting greens with miniature sand traps, often heavily scattered with sheep dung.



Left: Bracken has overtaken grazed farmland, Upper Grulin, Eigg. Right: Intense grazing has resulted in exposed sandy areas, very short turf, Clachtoll Township, North Assynt Estate

Native, old-growth forest land in Scotland had effectively disappeared by 1800 in the face of increasingly intensive land use and desire for pastureland. Following World War I, major cutting of available timber in the British Isles left the UK with a shortage of available timber, leading to a major policy initiative to plant 1.7 million acres of new forest, largely through the establishment of a state forestry agency (Wightman 2011, 191). As with all segments of British governance, the advent of the Thatcher government in the late 70s introduced a period of privatization, and what had been largely an effort focused on state-owned land (almost entirely through the Forestry Commission) moved into an emphasis on incentives for privately planted forests. Plantings from this era of private-focused forest production on then-private estates now under community ownership now stand as harvest-ready timber stands which have become assets, nuisances, or both for community owned estates. Most of the forests planted in this era, sometimes called "commercial" or "productive" forests, consist of tall, straight non-native conifer species, with Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, larch, and lodgepole pine planted in very tightly gridded rows planted in raised furrows tilled into the ground.

The interior of these mature stands are extremely dark, entirely consisting of a single monocultured species, and are almost entirely devoid of insect, bird, or other wildlife. For such closely planted trees, the stands let through a surprising amount of wind, as the regimented placement can create wind tunnel effects through the trees. As such, these stands may produce large amounts of wood but function more like tilled cropland than forest ecosystems and are of effectively no value to wildlife tourism.

In terms of forestry, three "productive" woodlands of densely planted commercial conifers in northwest Mull provided the opportunity for the creation of the North West Mull

Community Woodland Company (NWMCWC), on land where the state and private interests were unable to find ways to economically harvest the woodland. Similarly, the management of a planting of Sitka spruce and larch in the forestry plantation on Eigg has been an ongoing project of the Eigg trust since the buyout. Both trusts have looked to harvest the forest as an economic asset, while also restoring at least some amount of native deciduous species. On Eigg, the intention remains to replace almost all of the commercial species with broadleaf, for which the trust has started a tree nursery in which to raise seeds harvested from existing deciduous forests on the island in order to preserve local genotypes, rather than import seedlings from mainland stock. NWMCWC is largely replanting with the commercially desirable species in places where they have thrived, but is removing experimental plantations of unsuccessful commercial species and replacing them with native deciduous forest.

Both trusts have begun the process of trying to recover blanket (or peat) bogland which had been partially drained and planted with conifers, the planting of which significantly reduces net carbon capture and disrupts a local ecosystem with high wildlife and cultural significance. Restoration is expensive and has no major financial benefit—both trusts have undertaken it largely without external funds out of a sense of community responsibility.

Townships and villages

Settlements on most rural estates can be categorized as either townships or villages, with any collection of houses, even just a few, usually qualifying as a kind of township. These are often but not always in designated crofting townships, with associated common grazings. In

places, such as on Eigg, where housing plots have been carved out of farms or common grazings, the residents often come up with new names for the area or adapt older ones, effectively establishing new townships in the community's vernacular.



The village of Dervaig on Northwest Mull, as seen from the community forestry plot. Recently cut timber for sale is in the foreground. The small white line in the center of the photo is the village church spire.

Also in vernacular landscape terms, some larger agglomerations of housing and businesses may be designated a village. No hard and fast rule for the difference between a township and a village was ever articulated by any of my respondents, but most pointed to the presence of at least a couple of common businesses, in particular a shop, a post office, or a bar, although only one of these would not generally be considered enough to elevate a settlement to the status of being a village.



The interior of the community hall on Eigg in 2016, shortly after the annual buyout anniversary celebration ceilidh, a major annual event.

One particular type of facility which is found in many communities, often in villages, is the community hall. These halls host a wide range of activities and functions. Many, such as the hall in Dervaig on Mull, are close to primary schools and serve as the school gymnasium for physical activity, and may also function as community recreation centers as well as hosting both formal and informal after school programs. The hall on Eigg also hosts the island's central social events, its ceilidhs, as well as the meetings of the Eigg residents association.

Transportation

A common feature of a great many of the estates which have undergone transition to community ownership is simply that, travelling from abroad, they can take quite a while to get to, particularly in comparison to other parts of the United Kingdom. The specific reasons for this can be probably be best imagined by the reader—given that many of the estates have transitioned in response to long years of clearance, displacement, and population decline, the urgency to build strong transportation links to them remains low. Nearly all of the land trusts I visited in my initial surveys as well as all four of the focal communities which I examined in depth required either a trip on a Caledonian MacBrayne ferry or a long drive on narrow and winding roads to reach them.

Roads

In the UK road numbering system, the "M" system of motorways (or limited access highways) extends no further north than Perth in the eastern foothills of the highlands. Beyond that, a few of the "A" numbered highways, most notably the A9 from Perth to Inverness, have been converted to four lane roads (or "dual carriageways"). Most arterial roads through the highland mainlands, however, remain two-lane roads that wind considerably through the rugged topography. Below the level of those arterial roads, many roads that connect largely residential townships to villages with more critical businesses will be single-lane paved tracks with periodically wider passing spaces. Driving on these roads requires constantly looking ahead for on-coming cars, at which point drivers must negotiate who is nearest to a pull-off space (sometimes requiring driving in reverse for a short while), at which point one car will pull to the side in the widened paved area and allow the other

car to pass. Despite these limitations, many local drivers will drive these extremely curvy roads at up to 50 mph. This inevitably leads to conflict and frustration between locals and the tourists who flood the area during the warmer months, as described by one interviewee during a driving tour:

Respondent: [driving, in frustration at an on-coming driver who has just missed a passing place] there is a passing place back there.

Interviewer: [narrating to myself] we're on the one land roads, which at the moment we're in peak tourist season or thereabouts. So an awful lot of people who don't quite understand how to do this.

Respondent: Bloody right they don't, and I don't know what's going on. He could have gone back there, you know, no problem at all. . . . I've got to find a space for him to get past. [while backing up for an extended length] More than 50 meters.... Yeah, exactly. Now you know where we started reversing? . . . Just 15-20 meters past that point there is a passing point. . . . But most of our visitors find that reverse isn't fitted to their cars.

While the A and B roads have some national funds to maintain them, the side tracks are usually funded by the local council or by the local landlord. The designations also matter because of which roads get attention in case of bad weather. As Marianne Simpson, owner of Flossie's Beach Shop on the North Assynt Estate, explains, operating on a minor road presents challenges due to the frequency of bad weather on the west coast:

Interviewer: So what are the challenges of running the store up here?

Simpson: Um, supplies has got to be the number one – is supplies. In – in the summertime, it's keeping on top of supplies and getting stuff up here, which to be fair, I do get deliveries almost every day of something. . . . But, the wintertime this year we were sort of closed off for four to five days, so supplies did become an issue, but I'd been watching the forecast. So I knew snow was coming, so I stocked up on bread and food. There was a lot of bread. I had milk in the freezers and stuff, so nobody starved.

Interviewer: And that – that's an important thing, because it – it's not easy to get down to Lochinver if it's a –

Marianne: No, not on this road, because it's classed as minor road. So, the main roads are the priority for keeping clear. Um, these roads are just if we've got time and if we've got any salt left, which means the kids get ages off school – which, sure, they don't complain about. But, uh, yeah, so you have to keep an eye on the weather. You know what's going on. Everybody has lots of freezers, so everybody's prepared.

Piers, Ferries, and Docks

Transportation throughout not just the Hebrides, but also the west coastal mainland of Scotland, has been historically dominated by a single mode of transit, the boat. Boat building and seafaring have been essential activities for making life sustainable throughout this period, making sufficient provision of sea transport both a necessity for political regimes as well as a critical means of gaining economic and political advantage. During the dominant periods of the naval-driven British Empire, Glasgow grew from a tiny port to an industrial powerhouse largely on the shipbuilding industry, and Scottish universities turned out ships engineers to the point that the cliché of the Scotsman in the engine room made it into science fiction, with the Montgomery "Scotty" Scott character in the original Star Trek cast.

Water transport remains the only way to reach many of the Hebridean islands, and even for places like Lewis and Harris which are served by the Stornoway airport, water transport remains the far and away the dominant mode for reaching the islands in the first place. Most ferry service is provided by government subsidized and contracted services, for which the carrier in the western isles and inland lochs is Caledonian MacBrayne. CalMac, as it's informally known, has existed for decades, originally as a private company, but in more recent years it has gone through several iterations with some degree of public ownership or oversight. CalMac operates a range of services, including providing crossings between mainland peninsulas which are deeply separated by sea lochs. Certain routes receive the designation of "lifeline" services, which recognizes that those routes provide a service without which life in the communities served becomes very difficult.

Additionally, starting in 2008, the Scottish government piloted a program called Road Equivalent Tariff (RET), under which certain passenger fares for ferry routes to the Outer Hebrides, Coll, and Tiree (the most outlying of the Hebrides), were calculated based on the distance travelled. The stated intention was to make the user fare the same as an estimate of the cost of driving an equivalent distance on the roads, with a government subsidy underwriting the extra cost. This had the effect of lowering rates, dramatically in some instances, and in the early pilot ridership rose 30% across the affected routes. Subsequently, in 2011, Transport Scotland announced the roll-out of RET fares across all routes in the western isles for pedestrian passengers and non-commercial and small commercial vehicles (Transport Scotland 2013, 45-49).



The pedestrian ferry that connects Ulva to the pier at Ulva Ferry on the Isle of Mull, currently docked at the pier on Ulva. In the background, the Lagganulva area of Mull can be seen across the water on the right.

Ulva, Detail of Pier, Church, and House Area



Public piers, used by CalMac ferries, other private ferries, and all manner of other boats are necessarily major pieces of infrastructure not just for islands, but for mainland communities as well. As with other aspects of critical infrastructure in the area, pier construction and improvements are often joint efforts involving government funds, landlord funds, and indirect funds that come through CalMac and other entities. Piers on all of the Small Isles, including Eigg, were upgraded in coordination with CalMac between 2003 and 2006 (Highland Council 2006). Camille Dressler's history of Eigg recounts that the Eigg Trust rebuffed CalMac's original location for a new pier because it would disrupt a rare arctic tern breeding ground, and instead insisted on a pier at the end of a longer causeway, that ultimately results in a longer walk on and off the ferry.

Two anecdotes from residents of Eigg illustrate two different aspects of private ownership and piers and how particular, literal views may impact the direction of estate ownership. In the first, one respondent said that the most recent long-term owner, Schellenberg, made a point to keep the the trees cut low between the balcony on the front of the lodge and the view towards the main pier, just down the hill, so that he could watch who was coming and going on the given day's ferries back to the mainland. This reflects a kind of necessary paranoia that many rural Scottish residents on many estates report regarding landlord relations, where any kind of agitation or engaging in activities of which the landlord disapproves could see residents "turfed out" of (evicted from) their houses, barring the special protected crofting tenancy. The second aspect regards another anecdote told by an Eigg resident about the pier on the neighboring isle of Muck, where the private owner forced the relocation of the new pier was similarly relocated away from CalMac's original recommendations, but in this instance because the owner did not want the pier to

spoil the pristine view from their lodge of the sea loch in which it was set. As a result, the pier sits at an awkward angle and position, and according to my respondent, makes it very difficult for the ferry drivers to call at Muck in bad weather, sometimes forcing them to cancel the stop at Muck entirely. Given the criticality of the ferry service, these cancelled calls can create major disruption of both necessary supplies as well as preventing revenue from reaching the island in the form of visitor spending.

Piers are used by private entities as well, and for some communities connect residents with a more recent source of employment, the rapidly growing number of salmon farms in Scottish waters. Salmon farming provides a source of steady, year-round employment for some residents, and the work of tending to them regularly as well as stocking and harvesting them requires the use of local piers, which brings in not only use fees but also the patronage of workers to local service businesses. At the same time, the industry is controversial because of its high environmental impacts, particularly on water quality and the seabed, as well as because of concerns for the overall health and well-being of the salmon in the pens. Community trusts are largely split over this; the Eigg Trust, during my field work, debated and ultimately rejected a proposal to place salmon farms for the first time in the waters around the island. On the other hand, in the early stages of community ownership, the salmon farms serviced out of the pier in Gravir provided the Pairc Estate with some of its most dependable early operating income.



Loch Odhairn, looking from the village of Gravir on the Pairc Estate, over the local dock and pier. In the foreground, a sign for Marine Harvest McConnell, a salmon farm services firm, advertises the presence of salmon farming in the sea loch. To the upper right of the sign in the loch, the floating service platform for the salmon pens is visible.

Piers and docks may also be sites for landing wild caught fish, although the politics of fishing rights in British waters are complicated and intricately tied up in the politics of Brexit. The loading docks at Lochinver in Assynt serve as the unloading site for large quantities of fish. Increasingly during Britain's membership in the European Union, British fishing grounds were increasingly fished by continental companies who then shipped the vast majority of the catch down through Scotland and England and over to Europe. The exclusivity of this catch was a point of some consternation among a staff member of the Assynt Foundation:

I'm conscious, um, that I come to where I see – and this is a bigger issue, you know, white vans taking all our fish from here to France and Spain every day. Um, on Wednesday someone from Buckie near Aberdeen comes in a little van to give us fish to eat.

The perception of domination of fishing by non-British companies meant that areas with significant fishing industry were among the few parts of northwest Scotland where the Brexit vote obtained any significant level of support. (The highlands, much like Scotland as a whole, voted heavily in favor of remaining in the EU.) Notably, however, complications from Brexit created a crisis in the Scottish fishing industry in early 2021 as the open border with the EU gave way to new customs rules, as the fish caught were less sought-after for sale in the UK than in continental fish markets.

Renewable energy and landscape

While the range and scope of projects undertaken by community owned estates becomes difficult to generalize, an increased ability to deliver renewable energy projects on rural estates seems to be a durable feature of community ownership. I will pick up on other themes in renewable energy in subsequent chapters, a few aspects of the relationship between these projects and the landscape merit mention in this chapter.

The Hebrides and the west coast of the mainland have one of the greatest concentration potential sources of renewable energy in Europe. This is primarily driven by wind energy, where the broad exposure to steady prevailing winds coming across the Atlantic mixes with the high ridges of the Scottish highlands as well as a broad continental shelf suitable for offshore turbines to provide wide swaths of land where electric wind turbines are highly productive and often, depending on local grid infrastructure, highly profitable. This often comes into direct conflict with consumption of "the view," where the turbines are seen as an

overly modern imposition onto windswept hills and rolling waves. Famously, prior to his Presidency, Donald Trump clashed with Scottish leaders in an attempt to prevent the construction of wind turbines off the coast of one of his golf courses. These dynamics play out repeatedly at the local level, as one director of the North West Mull Community Woodlands Company described as to the reasons for declining to build windmills on trust owned ridges:

Interviewee: We could have had three wind turbines in the woodlands. We could have been putting 600,000 a year into the bank. And a segment of the population didn't want it.

Michael: For the visibility, I mean for the ruin of the view or--

Interviewee: Yeah, that and well to quote on of the directors, I just don't like them. Yeah, well fine. You know, and I said, but and why? I just don't like them. Okay, you know, had a public meeting, the public were told all sorts of scare stories about breaking the roads up with the transport. . . . So we now have to try and make our woodlands viable, whereas if we put on turbine in we would have been sitting on at least 250,000 pounds a year in perpetuity. It's a community decision, as you will gather not one I was particularly happy with. . . . Particularly as the bloody thing would have been near my house, so of all the people that would have seen it I'd have had the best view.

A former director of the Assynt Foundation described similar reasons for the Foundation declining to build wind farms on its estate:

. . . a good number of years ago one of the officers for the foundations who was leading the foundation at the time . . . had a scheme to erect a couple of wind turbines on the hill, up sort of behind the lodge. Well, my goodness, oh, you would have thought the world was going to end. . . . Because they're bought into Assynt, and they wanted Assynt preserved in the way they had bought into it. They were not in the slightest bit concerned about the income generation from these two turbines would have helped to stabilize the foundation financially, etc., etc., etc.

Views are far from the only reason that wind farms get blocked. The beginnings of the Paic Estate buyout came when the owner wanted to put a wind farm on the estate and promised payments into community benefit, but those payments were seen as being highly unequally distributed. The ensuing opposition eventually gave way to the estate being put

on the market in 2003, which in turn launched a community buyout effort, the dispute over which lasted for 13 years until 2016 when the buyout was finally successful.

Wind farms on the Outer Hebrides in particular, where wind energy is at its most plentiful, await a proposed £700 million high capacity electrical undersea interconnector across the Minch (the body of water separating Lewis and Harris from the northwest mainland). At present, electricity exports from the Western Isles to the mainland maximize the available transfer cable capacity, and while the new interconnector would almost certainly result in a dramatic acceleration of wind development, the price tag has resulted in continual deferment of its construction.

While wind energy remains the largest source of renewable energy in the area, hydroelectric potential is also high due to the steep slopes of the highlands combined with the extremely high amounts of rainfall that the coastal areas receive. All new hydroelectric projects which I documented were "run of river schemes," which differ greatly from the model of hydroelectric power common in the United States. Instead of impounding water in large reservoirs and then building generators at the dam site, small diversions are built either near the egress points of glacial lochs or simply in downhill running streams. When stream flow exceeds a particular pre-set amount, the water is redirected into a pipe which follows the stream to a downhill point, where a generator facility captures the energy before returning the water to the stream bed. These installations are often smaller than 100 kw in capacity. As such, hydroelectric projects are often nearly invisible on the landscape from a distance, and encounter far fewer objections on those grounds.



Upper (left) and lower (right) portions of hydroelectric facility owned by the Assynt Crofters Trust. If sufficient water above a minimum amount which must be maintained in the stream is available, the water is redirected through a pipe which runs along the stream downhill to the generation station below. This facility provides the Trust with its main source of financial stability.

Interactions between these energy systems and the landscape and the view are not all necessarily negative. While the Eigg buyout made headlines, it made possibly even more through its initiative to provide full time electrification to its residents via a system that

relied almost entirely on solar, wind, and hydroelectric energy, with diesel generators only being used as backup in emergency situations. While consultants and contractors did considerable work, the enterprise to establish and in many cases do major line installation and ongoing maintenance work was performed by Eigg residents. The system went online with the help of £1.6 million in support from the European Union (Dressler 2007, 214-215), and residents recalled in interviews the experience of hearing the ubiquitous household diesel generators go silent across the island, and people feeling like they had to be more careful talking outside as the words carried more easily. By 2008 the system provided 24 hour energy across the island, and now not only provides electricity at low cost to residents and visitors, but also remains a significant part of the tourism portfolio for Eigg, with maps and guides available to allow visitors to go and see the generation installations.

Despite the extensive efforts to transition to renewable energy, landscape inventories routinely turned up evidence for the ongoing presence of the fossil fuel energy economy. Despite extensive efforts to convert electricity production to renewable sources, home and commercial heating is still provided almost exclusively by combustion of natural gas or propane. In the storage areas behind An Laimhrig on Eigg, rows of propane canisters ready for loading or refilling demonstrate its ongoing presence even on an island where carbon-free energy production has been so central. At Ravenspoint in Pairc, a set of windmills sit in the gap above the road providing electricity and revenue for the trust, which is then used to underwrite the loss-operating fuel center below which provides multiple types of still-essential fossil hydrocarbons for residents.



Fuel service and wind farm at Ravenspoint on the Pairc Estate, both operated by the Pairc Community Co-operative.

Discussion

The presence (or absence) of visible non-actors in the landscape account

One outcome of using this form of identifying actors and visible traces of actions in creating accounts of these landscapes is that in centering importance and dynamic action, some features of the landscape which initially seem dominant and central almost disappear from the narrative. One example of this comes from the isle of Eigg, where upon approaching the island, the view is dominated by the towering figure of the Sgurr, the large rock promontory that sits at the southern end of the major ridge that runs most of the length of the island. Despite its immense size and immediate visual presence upon arrival on the island, the Sgurr made no appearances in my queries about important features of the island. Even while interviewees on Eigg repeatedly referenced "Eigg" as an actor which "holds us together," the symbolic manifestation of that was never this feature which dominates the view upon arrival. As Latour's actor-network methodology insists, elements should only be included as actors in ANT accounts if they can be seen performing actions and in turn being acted upon. Even in narratives where the island of Eigg itself is acting, the Sgurr is not. Similar absences could be seen around other visible landscape-dominating elements like Suilven, easily the most iconic mountain in Assynt and tourist attraction but which went largely unremarked on by locals, or the dramatic Stoer lighthouse on the North Assynt Estate, which only showed up in connection to its adjacent bathrooms.

Connectional spaces and the myth of Highland insularity

Further, a close examination of the successful maintenance regimes and the enterprise which emerged from them will show that these efforts do not operate along strictly in localized, insular networks of action, but involve a range of external actors from other localities and state entities and multiple levels of government. A mental walk backwards into the history of how these spaces come about reveals that the forces that produced these forms and arrangements in the first place similarly did not arise from the ground endemically, but rather landed on the ground in these rural spaces as part of much more extensive spheres of activity.

To return briefly to the Assynt sales brochure and its dramatic assertion of the "alien" status of "man himself," it is worth noting the implication of the spaces in northwest Scotland as being somehow "untouched," if not by human interference, then at least by the external forces of modernity, leaving them anachronistic relics of a timeless past. It is perhaps obvious at this point but it merits saying that if these spaces untouched by the waves of modernization which swept outward from Enlightenment Europe exist, I was at any rate unable to find any trace of them in some of the most remote parts of the region. Rather, the typologies of component landscapes and elements show forms—crofts, lodges, and commercial forests, for instance—whose first appearance on the landscape involves these more extensive movements and forces, and which have evolved in place in congress with evolving extensive networks, sometimes as successes and sometimes as failures. The success of renewable energy projects relies on the ability to connect them either to the national grid, as in the case of the proposed interconnector across the Minch, short distance cables to the local grid from the Assynt Foundation, or to develop a local grid, as on Eigg.

The ongoing presence of sheep on common grazings relies on the turbulent policy landscape moving from the EU Common Agricultural Policy to post-Brexit agricultural policy, with the potential for Scottish independence and re-entry to the EU on the horizon.

Palimpsest and obduracy

In a final point of emphasis, I want to return to the theme I have touched on several times, of how many of the component landscape forms in these spaces have a specific point of arrival on the ground, and how they persist in some way similar to the forms described. When highland landlords introduced the cheviot sheep and subdivided shoreline land into crofts, they did so with a specific eye towards extracting wealth in a specific set of economic conditions, largely to sell wool into a market inflated by demand for soldiers' uniforms in war-stricken Europe. Today, the cheviots and the crofts remain, but now it is the crofters raising the sheep for meat, often discarding the wool. Crofting was introduced to produce tenure precarity, but now it is retained for tenure security. Deer shooting lodges were opened to specifically cater to the British "old guard" elite, but more recently it is primarily Germans who come to stay in the same lodges to shoot at deer on the same landscapes, in old mansions and lodges now maintained by sustainability and affordable housing enthusiasts. Gardens laid out for elite enjoyment to the exclusion of locals, stocked with plants collected along the networks of empire and colonialism, are now enthusiastically maintained by people who will readily adopt the language of anti-landlordism and post-colonialism.

Not one of these systems can continue without ongoing human action to connect sites and actors and maintain these systems at the level of land, flora, fauna, transport systems, housing, legal arrangements, and so forth. And yet, the cast appears to have changed.

Landscape theorists and geographers have previously used the metaphor of palimpsest—the accumulation of multiple forms of writing on paper in times when quality paper was highly limited in availability. To this notion, planning scholars like Anique Hommels (2005) have applied concepts from STS to try to explain this form of *obduracy*, when the human participants and motivations, and at times even the material components, may change over time but the essential forms remain, without any deliberate intervention to retain them. The move inherent in actor-network theory as well as other forms of STS analysis to grant agency to non-human actors and assemblages may provide a useful framework for understanding this. If certain obdurate actors—such as the linear croft, the cheviot herd, the hunting lodge, and the slow-growing palm tree—gain some measure of stability in their entanglement with each other, those actor-networks *will recruit* humans to perform the necessary acts of maintenance. To be clear, this is neither a statement of fatalism or a declaration of naiveté or victimhood of the humans involved, as all actors in a network have some amount of constrained agency within these networks. Rather, it is a means of understanding how these obdurate systems, instituted with one set of clearly articulated motivations, may continue on with a different set of human motivations.

Relatedly, it is notable which activities and actors in the landscape have effectively disappeared from the accounts I assembled. Crofts were largely created in the 19th century to border the sea shore, largely to facilitate kelp harvest for sale to the alkali markets. The kelp is still easily visible growing on the rocky intertidal zones, but the kelp harvest,

whether for ground fertilizing or for alkali, has all but disappeared completely from these spaces. Similarly, cattle, once the single most dominant livestock kept on highland lands, and a long mainstay of crofting pasture work alongside sheep, are now visible in far smaller numbers than sheep. Further, many interviewees expressed concern at the loss of elements of the landscape, including croft-based livestock raising and community Gaelic speakers.

Discerning community among the landscape

In this chapter, I have dealt with the spaces in community ownership and the spaces which surround them largely through the lens of *landscape*, bringing with it a set of methods, theories, and conundrums. I note here, though, that the discourses which help to produce the community buyout movement deploy the term *community*. In the next chapter, I make the move from *landscape*, a somewhat fraught but well-theorized concept, to *community*, a considerably fuzzier and more nebulous concept, but one which clearly has extensive valence in this discourse.

Community

Introduction

In *Soil and Soul*, his book about his own role in Scottish land reform, Alastair MacIntosh recounts his opening address at the formal public launch of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust which he gave as one of the founding directors of the Trust:

I laid out the history of Eigg and the stifling effects of landed power. My account was set in a context of Scottish history and the wider state of the world . . . I concluded that if humankind is to have any hope of finding environmentally sustainable ways of life, we must *rebuild community*. That meant giving responsibility for their own place, planning, and enterprise back to the people who actually live in an area. (MacIntosh 2004, 170, emphasis mine)

The notion of community therefore, unsurprisingly, appears in the very first public press conference of the first attempt at a community buyout. Notably, MacIntosh's vision for community isn't static or preservationist; while his notion of rebuilding does imply a derelict state of affairs in need of rebuilding, his words here imply a dynamic process. As the review in Chapter 2 shows, the question of what "community" is and what it does in the context of community ownership repeatedly emerges from research into the Scottish community buyouts.

During my preliminary fieldwork, I spoke with Angus McDowall, chair of the Pairc Trust, shortly after the Trust had obtained title to the estate, thirteen years after the buyout attempt began. At the time, I was just beginning to explore this connection, which emerged repeatedly in the literature and rhetoric around Scottish land reform, of ties to the land as a central justification for community ownership.

Bacon: One of the motivations behind land reform seems to be the assumption that people have important ties not just to each other but to places as well. Do you think that's true?

McDowall: Very much so, the people are tied to this land. The croft I'm on, where I live, my forbearers have been there for the last oh 200 years . . . 1790 something, I think, they they came to live there or 1780 somewhere about there. So, yes they're tied to the land, and it's been a lot of the crofts here it's been the same families that have lived on there generation after generation. But we also have people that have moved into the the district in the more recent times and they're very welcome. In fact, without them, the place would be an awful lot quieter and it would be worse off without them. So yes, *the people are the land as much as the land are the people*. You know it's the two of them are intertwined, that's a certainty.

In response to my question about ties to land, McDowall very succinctly addresses two issues regarding construction of community that emerged repeatedly in my conversations. The first regards the status of people who have ancestors who lived in the same area, and how that impacts community. McDowall both cites his own ancestral ties as illustrative while also emphasizing the importance of incomers. He follows this, however, by returning to the connection between the land, including the emphasized phrase, "the people are the land as much as the land are the people," a phrasing which has stayed in my mind in my work on this project ever since. While McDowall's phrasing was particularly poignant, he was not at all unique among residents of rural estates in articulating the essential aspects of place and of land reform as critically involving people but not limited to the human population.

In this chapter, I turn my attention fully to articulating an active, robust, and empirically specified model of what *community* consists of, whom and what it includes, and what it does in the context of community ownership in rural Scotland. Specifically, I aim to describe the processes by which community ownership achieves the goals, as John Randall of Pairc succinctly put it, "to foster economic and social development in the area more effectively

than was done under the previous private landownership," and relatedly, understand the reasons why it may fall short of those goals. The model I propose and deploy here is grounded in fieldwork in the context of rural Scottish community ownership, but aims at a general structure for community analysis.

I begin by examining responses to the public consultation on the 2013 Land Reform Review Group's (LRRG) report on land reform to the Scottish Government, as well as responses to field interviews, as a starting point towards a vernacular understanding of what community is in Scotland, particularly in the context of land reform. From those responses, I propose a model of community which centers around the concept of *binding commons*, which I develop here as non-human actors which sit at the center of commoning processes, and in the act of co-producing community, provide a point at which community dynamics become particularly visible. I deploy this model in the context of the four focal areas where I conducted interviews, specifically in the context of concerns around the local stores which provide the primary source of food and other essentials in these communities. I use these interview data to empirically ground this model and to demonstrate the ways in which it connects and illustrates many different aspects of how community functions in these spaces. The model I develop allows for an articulation of how, precisely, community processes may transform outcomes in rural areas to foster that economic and social development of which Randall spoke.

Defining community

I intend for the model of community which I propose in this chapter to be grounded in vernacular understandings of community. As such, in this section I briefly revisit literature

on community before analyzing how community appears in responses to a Scottish government public consultation regarding land reform policies. I then move into how interviewees responded to questions about the definition and bounds of their own communities. In all of these analyses, I will be focusing in particular on specifically articulated definitions of the word "community" as well as the ways in which the subject is talked about. Also, following the emphasis on silences and absences discussed in Chapter 2, I will pay particular attention to places where certain actors noticeably disappear from definitions and narratives, as well as where some decline to speak or fail to give extensive detail.

Community as process

J. K Gibson-Graham, in establishing their framework of community economies, place the concept under the microscope, and note:

It is an interesting irony that in the current neoliberal political and economic climate, in which individualism is promoted as an unquestioned social good, all over the world the term *community* has increasingly come to the fore. (Gibson-Graham 2006, 84, emphasis theirs.)

For Gibson-Graham, the focus on community is not something to be accepted unreservedly; they note community is too often given a hollow, "fuzzy warmth" of something which is supposed to fix all problems while simultaneously lacking conflict and politics and failing to ruffle any feathers. In place of this passive, harmless version of community, Gibson-Graham articulate community economies which come from an active process of *becoming* community, with an eye towards the complex but necessary political economy inherent in that process (Gibson-Graham 2006, 86-89).

Fiona Mackenzie's extensive analysis of the formation and operations of the North Harris Trust in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland highlights the production of a community subjectivity as a central emergent process tied tightly to a change in ownership. She carries the Gibson-Graham process of becoming into the language of Judith Butler, outlining where these residents, spaces, and lands are undergoing these processes of becoming "collective subjectivities."

It is here – in a more formal as well as more everyday encounters – that property held in common is constantly a-doing, continually re-conjured, literally and figuratively, in the interest of a collectivity rather than in the interest of a private individual or a corporation. This collective and continuous a-doing of property is bound up with the becoming of a collective subjectivity. Where common right to the land is claimed, in other words, community and property are co-constituted. (Mackenzie 2013, 222)

In her view, this "becoming of a collective subjectivity" is tied with the disruption of a range of norms, which include property, labor, and divisions of nature and society.

At the same time that land owning community trusts become the sites of collective labour where property norms are "undone", so too do they become the sites where, through collective labour, the norming of nature through the nature/culture divide is unsettled. Whether it concerns conservation, on the one hand, or complicating processes of commodification, on the other, the disturbance of property norms opens nature to the possibility of more socially just and sustainable significations than was previously the case. (Mackenzie 2013, 223)

I will here document the ways in which state actors, activists, and public consultation responses have articulated both concerns regarding community. Many of these articulations focus on the ambiguity of the meaning of community, and notably, show differences between how community is expressed depending on political orientation towards the project of land reform. These articulations, their differences, and their political implications will inform the model of community I propose in the subsequent sections. I aim to align this

with the model of the active, continually produced version of community articulated by Gibson-Graham and Mackenzie above.

Community in the Land Reform Review Group and Consultations

In particular, the concept of community appears frequently in the 2013 report from the Scottish government-commissioned Land Reform Review Group (LRRG), including but not at all limited to community land ownership. The following passage is representative:

There has been substantial growth in community activity in Scotland's local communities over the last thirty years or so, though this has not been even across the country. A key change has been a shift from mere participation and engagement in community affairs, to community-led development and regeneration. As part of this, community ownership of land, buildings (including housing), and other property assets is a major component. (Scottish Government 2014, 81)

The LRRG report acknowledges, however that community is a difficult thing to define. Because land is the core of the Review Group's work, the concept of place is central, and therefore the focus here is on communities which are defined by geography, which can be applied to both rural and urban areas. These communities of place are often referred to as neighbourhoods in urban areas. But communities are more than simply a group of people living in a particular place. 'Community' involves a complex set of relationships between individuals and groups, involving networks and other linkages, such as family and kinship ties, collective voluntary action, informal reciprocity and trust. In addition, there are more intangible aspects such as sense of place and belonging, shared history and cultural identity, and, important to this report, attachment to land. (Scottish Government 2014, 82)

The authors note that their role is only to propose, and as such the document's rhetorical audience is both the Scottish government and the Scottish populace at large.

In the particulars of the Scottish system, major pieces of legislation are often initiated with commissioned reports such as the one produced by the LRRG. The government then publishes these reports with an open public consultation which solicits both general responses to the report as well as to a selection of more narrowly focused questions. The

government then collects these responses and publishes those responses, which are then taken as advisory inputs to the drafting of formal legislation. The process of the 2013 LRRG report ultimately led to the creation and passage of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016.

"How should community be defined?"

In particular relevance to this study, the public consultation asked, "how should community be defined?" While this question was asked in the specific context of the report's recommendations for requiring some non-profits to engage in a community consultation, many respondents took the question more generally¹³. To address how definitions of community related to opinion on land reform, I used a set of other questions on the consultation to classify respondents into equal sized groups of those in favor of land reform as articulated in the LRRG report, opposed to it, or in some level of mixed response on the subject. I then performed a textual analysis to look for differences in how they defined or discussed "community," both in response to the question about the proposed requirement for charities and in other responses.

In examining these results, a notable and (to this author) surprising difference arose. While supporters of land reform responded with a variety of definitions, land reform opponents often responded only with silence, with most oppositional respondents neglecting to answer the question at all. Further, those that did respond frequently used words such as "fragile" or "vulnerable" to describe rural communities. As I discussed in

¹³ Notably, responses overall reflected the ambiguity of the question: was this definition of "community" only for the benefit of defining whom charities would have to consult on major land use decisions, or was it to become a broader formal definition of community within state documents? This is, to a degree, a weakness in the framing of the consultation's question, and determining which framework operates in each case remains difficult to impossible.

Chapter 2, the theories of knowledge production and power differences which I draw on demand that this analysis pay attention to notable absences and silences. After providing an overview of the responses across the categories of land reform support, I interpret both the responses and the silences below.

Commonly, across all levels of support for the proposals, given responses largely agreed that those living in the “local area” constituted a community, with many advocating the use of electoral or governmental wards to define geographic boundaries for inclusion or exclusion. Further, multiple supporting respondents advocated the use of those governmental wards to define community, but then also advocated for the inclusion of the wards directly adjacent to the ward which included the land in question.

Land reform supporters: varied, broad definitions

Supporters of land reform provided a wide range of definitions of community, many echoing the LRRG report's acknowledgement of the difficulty of defining it. Some supporters did not go beyond the simple local residency framework:

All who reside within an agreed area.

Others included work or employment as sufficient for inclusion in a state definition of community:

A group of people who live and or work on the land permanently, who have a common aim for the betterment of the area they live in.

Some wanted a situational definition:

It would depend upon the situation. Crofting land policy should be determined by crofters.

Several incorporated similar phrasing to the LRRG's discussion of “communities of interest”:

Community should at its simplest be within a local geographic area but should be flexible enough to include communities of 'interest' where this would bring greater capacity to a group in order to achieve their objectives.

Others supported far more broad definitions:

There should be several layers of definition [sic].

All of Scotland is the common community to which land belongs.

Scotland is the community that requires land as a food growing resource. The dispossessed who had to move from the rural areas are the displaced community and they should be a significant "community," that need redress. Community there after should be defined by those who need the land as a means of livelihood [sic] for the rights of shelter warmth and food. Communities should be "calibrated," by land use safeguards who should not come from that immediate community but from another similar so that objectivity in decisions can be maintained.

To summarize the positions of proponents of land reform, while responses proposed a wide range of opinions on exactly what constitutes community, they shared an apparent concern about community as an entity to be granted official state recognition and authority. These responses defined community more openly and broadly, sometimes including more than just the residential members of a community. Some proponent definitions included persons who were not residents but had other attachments to the local places.

Mixed or intermediate responses: narrower, ambiguous

In the intermediate category, responses which were not clearly for or against the land reform proposals tended to be more narrow in their definitions, with more than one advocating for using already established governmental wards to define it:

Always a difficult issue. Local government wards would be an understood concept. In the highlands, the community is often best identified by the glen or the strath. As examples, people identify themselves as being from "Strathardle", "Blackwater", "Glenshee", "Glenprosen" very readily.

Another highlighted employment and mutual benefit:

A community is a group of people who live in the same area and work together for the benefit of each other.

Land reform opponents: silences, restrictions, and vulnerability

Most strikingly, in the final category, the majority of oppositional respondents declined to answer the question. Among the smaller number that did answer, many sought very tightly restricted definitions of community:

A hugely complex question which I don't feel qualified to answer although feel strongly that it should be for genuine local community and not be abused by relaxed rules that allow outsiders to have influence. I would suggest it is very difficult to have a one fix [sic] definition that fits all.

Beyond simply calling it complex, many argued that the definition was too difficult altogether. As one response fully read,

That's the can of worms you don't want to open!

Another declared that in most cases “the 'community' tends to be self-explanatory,” while conversely another complained that it hadn't already been defined:

The Government should have defined what a community is before releasing this consultation. The fact that it has not is a major flaw.

Several oppositional responses deployed the word “community” as an object of concern or protection in their arguments against land reform in response to other questions.

However, these frequently treated community as something to be protected rather than something to be engaged with. One advocacy group's response (which gave no response in the request for definition of community) writes in opposition to the proposal to remove tax

breaks for estates dedicated to deer hunting and salmon fishing:

The reintroduction of sporting rates would lead to an immediate rise in unemployment for our fragile rural communities. Our shoot, like most others, is lucky to break even after paying costs and wages... the addition of rates would make the industry unsustainable.

On aggregate, most oppositional responses often ignored the concept of community as a whole except as a “fragile” thing worthy of paternalistic concern. When asked to define community, most opponents declined, and others argued that to do so was impossible,

inappropriate, or undesirable. Those few that did define community did so in the most strictly narrow way possible. As several oppositional responses were either landlords or property management agencies (or factors), they could have used the various textual response fields to emphasize their membership in the community or to advocate for community to be defined only as landowners, but in no cases did they do so. Multiple oppositional responses did complain that land owners had been made out as the “enemy” or had been assigned “blame” for current problems, but at no point did this take a rhetorical turn into inclusion in community.

Community and empowerment: who, what, and how

One conclusion from these results, strictly following given responses, is that increasing support for land correlates with a broadening definition of community, even though land reform supporters vary considerably in how exactly to broaden that definition. This conclusion could be puzzling in the abstract, but in the context of the proposal and enactment of new legislation, "community" is under consideration for receiving new powers and entitlements to consultation. A close corollary can be drawn from the language which implicitly belittles "communities," particularly rural ones, as fragile or vulnerable, and thereby perhaps too weak to trouble with empowerment.

One particularly noteworthy response from the Scottish Churches Committee, a broadly ecumenical body of every major Christian denomination in Scotland, questions the consultation requirement. The committee's largely oppositional response was almost entirely devoted to the three questions of charitable consultation and community, and among other comments, asked the following:

The Committee considers there would need to be a precise definition of “community engagement” in the legislation – which it anticipates may not be easy to draft – so that charity trustees could be certain that they had taken adequate steps to comply with the duty. Similarly, there would require to be a precise definition of the bodies with whom they would require to consult. Again, the Committee considers that this will be very difficult to “pin” this down given that there will be many bodies who may claim to be potentially affected by “land management” decisions. For example, very good arguments could be put forward as to Congregations themselves being bodies who would have considerable justification to assert that they are representative of the local community. Would other charities have to consult with them?

While the churches' opposition can be largely read as opposing a new regulation which would be encumber local churches in particular, these questions they raise about the status of churches or other institutions as being part of or representative of communities are difficult to dismiss. On the one hand, with rapidly declining religiosity in the UK, there are many residents who would strenuously object to having their engagement mediated by a local congregation. On the other hand, however, what other institution or process should mediate those relationships? Further, do churches as an entity unto themselves have standing as part of "local community," or do they only have that standing *vis a vis* their congregants? If churches do have standing in the community, what other institutions may make a similar claim?

This response from the churches illustrates clearly that underlying the question of *defining* community in this context is the question of who, under community empowerment, *gets the power*. With new requirements for consultation along with a revised and expanded right-to-buy, community here is a site of politics, and the public consultation becomes a venue for contesting that site. In this lens, it is particularly noteworthy that so many of those opposed to land reform, when given the opportunity to contest the space of community, abstained in silence. I note that this is a very different silence to the kinds of silences

discussed in Chapter 2, the sort of failed speech acts that MacPhail (2003) interprets, where an actor speaks but is not heard. In these instances, there is no technical or representative failure, as all of these respondents have successfully negotiated the consultation process and submitted written answers to other questions and concerns. Rather, this particular silence is an *intentional abstention* of a speech act in a particular venue. As indicated above, land reform opponents who did answer the question defined community as narrowly as possible. In this context, the abstentions make considerably more sense. Without more sources of data is impossible to say empirically why so many opponents of land reform declined to contest this question, or to argue as the Scottish Churches Committee did, for their own position in the formal definition of community. However, as I will discuss below, along with other evidence I interpret the abstention not as a strangely uniform apathy but rather as a deliberate omission, indicating some level of hostility by land reform opponents to any conception of community as an active, dynamic entity.

In this analysis, land reform supporters showed considerable concern with defining and empowering community in its own right, while land reform opponents declined to discuss the notion of community, or minimized or problematized it or treated it as a fragile thing to be protected. Community as an entity was frequently contrasted with either the "free market" or the "status quo" in the language of both supporters and opponents.

Unmistakably, the consultation responses demonstrated the near-omnipresence of ambiguity in regard to a precise definition of community. However, any recognition of a definition of "community" in these contested spaces represents, as Mackenzie argues, a disruption of norms and a challenge to the interests and preferences of land reform opponents.

With these preliminary results in hand, I turn to my field interview data for an indication of how community is defined by residents in areas where community buyouts are an active local concern.

Community in field interviews

The LRRG public consultation asked its specific question regarding defining community for the purposes of informing legislation, and as such respondents were largely considering it in the abstract or formal legal sense. Because of the consultation and legislation operate at the level of Scottish parliament, the spatial extent of the responses spanned the entirety of Scotland. While the scale of the LRRG responses is appropriate for consideration of legislation, they do little to illustrate an "internal," specific understanding of community by the residents of the places where community as an active process is ostensibly working to transform possibilities.

To address this, in my primary field work interviews, I asked residents how they would define the community they lived in. One commonality across almost all responses was that whatever other definitions they included, nearly every response indicated that at least part of the definition involved what I will call the "primary area"—specifically, Assynt, Pairc, Eigg, or Northwest Mull. In that, the responses make clear that a common vernacular understanding of "community" exists for which these names specify the local version of it. Beyond that general agreement, however, there was considerable diversity in the responses as to how might one define it in a formal sense.

Some responses specified community as simply the precise administrative definition for postal code or voting purposes, and inclusion in community as being nothing more than

residency in an area. Some simply defined it as the geographic region rather without specifying residents or other population. One respondent in Pairc perhaps unwittingly cast aspersions on this concern:

I know you can spend a lot of time trying to define the community. There's no easy answer to it even academically. You could easily do a PhD thesis just on that . . . My own view is it's you can waste a lot of time getting into the theory of what a community isn't. Look in this area the community is the people who live in . . . You could certainly pick holes in that, but it includes people like myself who are incomers. We want to live here, certainly includes the people who come from this area. And I think it includes some people who come from this area who no longer live here. And so there's some overlapping circles here. But it's actually easier in practice. The Pairc community, it's quite easy, I don't think many people would disagree. The academics might disagree, but on the ground . . . the 400 people who live here.

Many respondents noted the multiplicity that this respondent calls "overlapping circles." Often they would mention the village or township where they lived as well as the name of their primary area, along with other subsets of the local area that they might be connected to. In order to draw out the articulations of these sub-communities within broader communities, I asked residents if there were parts of the community they felt closer to than others. One respondent in Assynt who lived on a croft on ACT land and who also had served as a director in the Foundation responded this way regarding how to define the Foundation's community:

Respondent: Most closely. Just wildlife and the environment. Everybody connected to that, the Assynt Field Club, you know, the Foundation, Culag Wood, we're all interested in wildlife.

Interviewer: What is the Assynt Field Club?

Respondent: It's just that, the Assynt Field Club has been going for 30 years, I think. Just recording birds and flowers and insects and all that for the website. Um, and that, you know, Facebook has been an amazing in this, because before Facebook came along, we all did our individual things. And . . . and Field Club is the first club that a lot of incomers would join. Because it was full of incomers. And, which is not a bad thing. But they were all interested in wildlife. But Facebook, and getting the message out there and seeing the people that interact with it, everybody does that. Which is really, really nice. Whereas before it was just all incomers. So yes, I feel close

with the wildlife, but there are a lot of people doing good things with the wildlife and I don't feel the pressure to be recording everything now because there are other people doing it. . . . But I'm also very connected to the land. So anything that happens to the lands, whether it's crofting or forestry, or the wildlife, anything outside really.

Interviewer: What would you say are the bounds of the community?

Respondent: Yeah, there's communities of communities in this – you know, community – there's the wildlife communities, they're all over the place. And there's the crofting community. Because you've got crofters in Elfin who are nothing to do with the Assynt Crofters' Trust. But they're still in Assynt.

On a similar note, one respondent in Assynt described three communities in the areas:

There are three communities here really. There is the crofting communities who have been here for generations and then there are people who have been here and have established within the community - I'm probably one of them - but I'm not a local. Then you've got the holiday cottage and retirement cottage scene who tend not to get involved in much to do with the community a lot, unless they become sort of involved in Culag Woods or the cancer fundraising; there is a bit of that goes on.

In this vein, I further asked residents if non-residents could be considered part of the community, which generally led to articulations of grey areas. In addition to others mentioning involvement in local efforts, such as volunteer work, a respondent on Mull noted how non-residents can be "invested emotionally" and thereby have some claim to being part of the community.

I'm sure there, you know, . . . there is a small C and there is a big C community isn't there? There, there is a kind of diaspora for a sort of people who feel very connected with it. There is, I can think of people that don't actually live here all the time, but are, you know, have very long family connections that I think are important as part of it. . . . And when I was growing up there was folk that came every year on holiday, and their kids became pals with us. Some of them even ended up eventually moving here, where is the line when you stop being just a kind of visitor and you're more than that? I don't know what the answer is, but there are a lot of people that . . . come year after year after year that are more than . . . So they're invested in it emotionally more than just, so yeah, there is that.

Along these same lines of connection and ties, residents on Eigg emphasized that their community was in part defined by a set of values and norms. A respondent in Pairc noted the uniqueness of the high religiosity of the Western Isles as something that set it apart. One

respondent who worked as a potter noted that one community he felt he lived in was the online community of artists, whose shared values and forms of labor brought them together.

A theme that emerged in several responses, both to questions regarding the definition of community as well as in other contexts about the direction of particular community, was common concern for specific places or enterprises on the trust landscape. Specifically, almost all respondents at some point in my interviews with them expressed concerns about enrollment in the local schools as well as having a local supermarket or food shop which received enough business or support to stay open.

In many cases, land trusts that were either considering or undertaking housing projects explained that a motivation behind them was a hope that residents would move in with school-aged children and help to justify keeping the local elementary school open, and that they would spend money in the local food shop, thereby circulating money in the community and helping to keep the shop open. When I asked why these were important, respondents would almost uniformly explain that it was the only way to keep people wanting to live in the area. One might dismiss this reasoning as circular logic—people should move in to keep the schools open so people will still move in—if respondents did not frequently refer to this project as helping to maintaining the community.

This response by Ray McKay, vice chair of the Assynt Crofters Trust, articulated this particularly clearly:

Bacon: Can tell me a little bit about the importance of the shops in the community and what –

McKay: Just that. If it's a community – it's hardly a community that doesn't have shops. . . . It's not really a community if it doesn't have shops.

Bacon: And why is that?

McKay: Well, because you need a . . . I think a community is defined not just by a geographical, you know, draw a line and say, "That's a community." That's not a

community. A community is a group of people who live geographically close together, who have things in common. A shop gives you something in common.

If there's nothing in common but shops in Inverness, or Dingwall, or Ullapool [much larger towns within 1-2 hours drive], whatever, then it's not really a community. It's just a stacking of houses, I think. So I would like – I would like to think that there are things – that's why the school is important. That's why building enterprises which will keep people on the estate means that you have more possibility of keeping it a community or turning it into a community if it's not a community.

In the next major section below I will follow a more thorough illustration of these dynamics involved in maintaining shops, largely exploring the ways in which institutions such as the local shop become central actors in the production of local community.

Silences and absences in interviews

A few absences in my interview data merit a mention here. First, as I have discussed previously, despite repeated attempts I largely failed to recruit oppositional voices to community ownership for participation in this study. Some simply declined to respond to email or telephone queries, while others declined in person. Second, I also had difficulty getting people who had no formal role in community ownership to sit for a recorded interview. Most commonly, people would redirect me to known trust leaders, with words like, "[leader] can tell you all about that," even after insisting I was looking for non-expert views. In at least two cases, while recruiting interviewees in a local pub, after I announced that I was looking for people to talk about community ownership, people quietly got up and left. Third, particularly in Assynt, some major leaders in community ownership declined to be interviewed after multiple attempts to contact them.

I do not want to over-interpret this, given that in some of these cases, people very likely simply could not or did not want to give up their time. Some of this, particularly in the latter case, can be attributed to researcher and journalist fatigue. Even those who graciously

agreed to interviews indicated this, such as Maggie Fyffe on Eigg who admitted to me that she was getting tired of doing interviews. Particularly given the political nature of land reform, these areas are no strangers to journalists or other researchers looking for problems which might show how community ownership is a failure¹⁴. As I will discuss further in Chapter 6, Assynt in particular has gathered a reputation for division, and given my accidental timing both before the Assynt Crofters Trust's 25th anniversary and news of financial difficulties at the Assynt Foundation, trust leaders may well have been wary of unknown researchers who might be looking for narratives of division and discord.

Even with these caveats, however, my repeated impression from these interactions was that many of those who declined to be interviewed did so out of a distaste for the topic. Even within interviews, one person who later in the interview expressed high frustration with one trust in particular, when I asked if he wanted to share his thoughts, replied, "no, I really don't!" in a way which, in his tone of voice, very clearly conveyed his disgust. In other cases, refusals to talk seemed to stem from a long-internalized practice of not openly discussing problems with the landlord. For example, in an interview during preliminary fieldwork a leader of one small trust, who also operated a local business owned by the area's major private landlord, nervously checked over both shoulders before answering when I asked if her activism raised any concerns about her tenure. As trusts have moved into the position of the landlord, this seems to have carried over. When I asked one long-time resident of a trust-owned estate about his experience, he started to speak before stopping, saying, "no, I'd better not, I'll get in trouble." These silences can also come about not because

¹⁴ Eigg in particular has had repeated rounds of stories written about major conflicts erupting and ruptures emerging between factions of residents since even before the buyout happened.

of unease, but of a strategic decision to not speak. One Eigg resident told me the following about when IEHT secretary Maggie Fyffe and the infamous incident where Eigg's former owner's vintage Rolls Royce went up in flames:

. . . you always get lots of journalist types, documentaries, they always ask Maggie about the Rolls Royce, and did you ever find out who it was? And you know, I was saying about Maggie doing this uh, laughing-type thing. Well, that's all she does. She laughs. She never answers anything.

To some degree, these are all simply the difficulties of doing research with human informants, and given limited time and budget I must go with the data I have collected. However, as I will expand upon later in this chapter and further in Chapter 6, one of the critical features of this model of community is that it operates as a space of knowledge production, information sharing, and decision making. As such, when deploying this model to explain community dynamics in these areas with community land ownership, I will continue to pay particular attention to where these silences may indicate disconnection, disapproval, or opposition.

Before moving on, one more common element in the construction of community is worth mentioning. All of the focal areas depend on tourism for critical economic inputs. The tourist season starts roughly around Easter in the spring and runs into September or October. Because of the northern latitudes on and around the northern end of mainland Great Britain, the exceptionally long days of summer are matched by exceptionally short days, sometimes with only 3-4 hours of sunlight, in the middle of winter. Additionally, the omnipresent wind of Scotland's west coast picks up in winter time, and the lack of tourist presence means that ferries run less frequently and many businesses close for extended stretches.

As such, these concerns about shop viability, as well as population levels, becomes much more acute in the winter. Residents who spend most or all of the winter in the area were particularly valued in most all of my interviews as well as in casual, informal conversations I had with local residents outside of the formal interviews. One pair of waitresses in Tobermory, the largest town on Mull in an area adjacent to but not included in the Northwest Mull area, explained their "two winter" rule when it came to evaluating newcomers. In their explanation, if someone stayed through two winters on the island and still wanted to stick around, they could be relied on to become more deeply part of the community.

Re-assembling community: the binding commons model

In the previous section, I have drawn on two different sources of empirical data to provide a general broad-based set of requirements which any functional model of "community" in Scottish community ownership must meet. I briefly review those here, to provide the initial empirical structure for the "binding commons" model of community dynamics which I situated in theory in Chapter 2. I then draw on interviews and landscape inventories of the general shops which serve these areas to more fully develop the model. Following this section, I discuss how binding commons help produce community infrastructure, which provides community as an institution with the transformative power demonstrated by Scottish trusts.

Empirically derived pre-requisites

The analysis of the LRRG data and the responses in resident interviews presents some thorny questions about what this vernacular understanding of "community" implies. It applies to well-understood areal delineations, but has a murky definition to exactly what it is within those spaces. Even with its murky understanding, it appears to be threatening to the "status quo" and the "free market." It definitely includes the residents in a given area, but may or may not include others. It has something to do with emotional ties to an area or with strong connections to wildlife. In articulating a model of "community" which has a formal structure and conforms to a robust set of requirements, I start with these vernacular articulations of community, but also set a number of other requirements that any such model must meet in order to provide an empirically relevant and analytically useful framework.

First, a community must be at least somewhat limited in scale and extent. While the occasional response to the public consultation claimed a community of all of Scotland or all of humanity, in the vernacular understandings of community that emerged, these were never articulated. The ubiquity of naming of "primary communities," even among interview respondents with very different notions of the constitution of community, shows that if any theoretical model of community is to align with the vernacular understanding of it, it must in the end produce something that conforms to a naming of primary area. Further, communities have an inside and an outside, even if the boundary between inside and outside contains a wide grey area in which people are included within community to varying degrees. However, as many of my interview respondents noted, most people belong to many communities, some of which are nested inside others. Any model of community

which flattens or overly simplifies these will not conform to this vernacular understanding of community and thus will be empirically weak and difficult to apply functionally.

Relatedly, "community" as a word appears to have a different connotation than either just a geographic region or a population of people. Conversationally, interviewees used the word "community" both to indicate place in some instances and social dynamics in others. This conforms to Gibson-Graham and Mackenzie's assertions of community as being fundamentally "more than human," as something which fully incorporates human social patterns but moves beyond them as well. The responses on how to define community frequently emphasized ties of one form or another to the place, landscape, institutions, or other people.

Additionally, the results of the LRRG consultation along with the successes of community ownership in substantially altering the trajectories of social, economic, and ecological development in these areas indicate the concept has some degree of power. These results demand that the model explain community's political and economic potency. As such, the model I propose for community must not be simply an occurrence or a happenstance that emerges from underlying physical and social conditions, but rather must be something which actively reshapes them and transforms them.

Finally, in the words of Gibson-Graham, community must be more than either a "fuzzy warmness" or a cure-all tonic for social ills. Communities in this model must be able to "go bad"—to be oppressive or unjustly exclusionary, to weaken and fail, or to leave goals and needs unmet. Further, the model should be able to help identify the mechanisms and reasons for this through empirically observable materials, ties, and processes.

The boundary object and the binding commons

In Chapter 2, I detailed the theoretical work which informs the development of the *binding commons*, which I articulate as the central non-human actor in the development of a rigorous definition of community. The binding commons is empirically identifiable as a matter of concern in the community which receives actions of use, care, and maintenance from a possibly complex or attenuated set of economic, social, and political arrangements. It performs actions including community binding, differentiation, exclusion, reciprocal care, and directs internal controversies towards closure. As such, the binding commons forms a material, empirically observable site at which point community may be analyzed, assessed, and intervened upon.

In particular, Susan Leigh Star's definition of the *boundary object* provides a particularly useful predecessor to the binding commons here. Star's boundary object¹⁵ is a material or fixed matter that allows collaboration between disjunct groups without requiring them to come to consensus, allowing those groups to hold differentially structured arrangements and interpretations around the object. The product of boundary object arrangements, to Star, is a kind of infrastructure that arises to meet "information and work requirements." Star's boundary object specifically produces *infrastructure to facilitate collaboration* between groups without requiring consensus, either on decisions or even on basic epistemologies of how to think about the problem. By contrast, the product of binding commons arrangements is a

¹⁵ As Star notes in her 2010 retrospective of the boundary object, the concept has been taken up in a wide variety of contexts. Star pointedly declines to declare herself authoritative on how the concept should be used, but does delineate some specific ways she perceives the concept. For this reason I will frequently refer to "Star's boundary object" to emphasize that I am building on her specific construction of the concept rather than its many derivative forms.

specific kind of infrastructure which I will call "community infrastructure." I break down the constitutional processes around the binding commons into four categories of action.

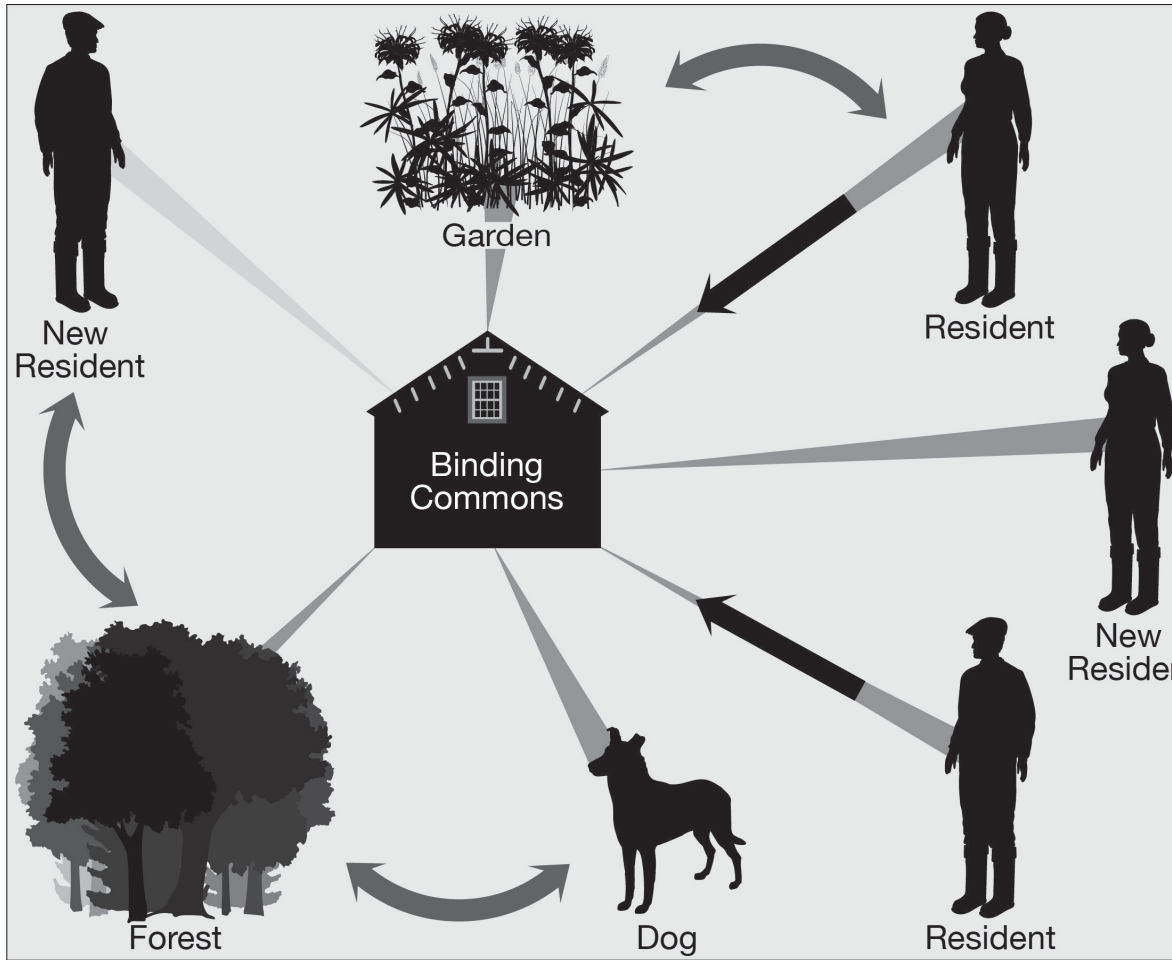
The first essential element of a binding commons in a community is a *matter of common concern*. To put it somewhat differently, the binding commons must be a matter, a place, or possibly an regularly occurring event which can lay claim to some amount of concern—in the form of thought, memory, or speech—broadly among human members of the community.

Second, partially as a response to the concern in the first element, that binding commons must assemble a range of *direct actions and ties* with the other constituents of the community. This can be in the form of formal or informal transactions, reciprocal relationships, acts of maintenance and care, inputs of labor or other resources, or even just the simple act of presence at a regular time. In many ways these actions represent a visible indication of this concern in the element above, in that the binding commons has the capacity to compel human members of the community to take some minimal set of actions. I specify this set of actions and ties as "direct" in that they are identifiable as a direct relationship between the binding commons and other community constituents. In a hypothetical example of a binding commons, imagine a school that a child attends, that a worker cleans, and that has a garden where a particular a plant grows.

Third, the constituent members develop *secondary actions and ties* with each other as a result of some manner of interaction via the ties and actions articulated above. In the hypothetical school, two parents of children in school together discover common interests, the worker befriends a dog near the school, a teacher decides to propagate the plant elsewhere.

Fourth, while it is not a requirement of these secondary ties, in a stable community system these will generally begin to form positive feedback loops across the actions, over time creating a pattern of *mutual reinforcement*. Notably, this mutual reinforcement happens among both the direct ties and the secondary ties. Perhaps the dog becomes an iconic fixture at the school, making the school more attractive to other parents, bringing more students into the direct tie of attending the school, and more parents find mutual interests among each other.

As mutual reinforcement strengthens the ties between constituents, the ties and actions settle into fixed arrangements, and the structure as a whole begins to provide *community infrastructure*. By infrastructure, I mean an informal system which can facilitate, connect, and accelerate roughly speaking, fulfills Star's capacity to help fulfill "information and work needs," and in so doing provides for both *binding* within the community as well as differentiation between the interior and the exterior of the community.



While I articulate these steps as a sequential process, this is somewhat misleading as there never becomes a stage when any of them is "over" per se—all four elements must recur in ongoing fashion, whether that's continuously, cyclically, or more sporadically repeated.

To illustrate the concept, I turn to a single form of binding commons which emerges as a matter of common concern in all of the focal communities in this study.

A common concern: the community shop

Here I draw upon that theoretical grounding in conversation with the empirical work above on how "community" exists in vernacular understanding in the context of rural Scotland and land reform. I illustrate how this concept functions in articulating the

processes of community function on the primary trusts by focusing on one repeated site of concern across all of the communities I visited: the local food store. Almost all of these stores are too small to be referred to as a "supermarket" in the UK, with the largest of them not larger than a few thousand square feet, and the smallest of which, Flossie's Beach Store in Assynt, scarcely over 200 square feet. All stock some manner of essentials, such as milk, bread, eggs, and some dry goods, while also providing snacks, sweets, souvenirs, and information for tourists. Since the privatization of the Royal Mail, many have also incorporated post offices into their operations.

As my interviews repeatedly showed, these small stores can act as far more than simply suppliers of goods to local residents. Although the sales of small goods provides the revenue which at least in part keeps the doors open, residents frequently cited many reasons for the critical importance of the stores. Sometimes this was directly, emphasizing the need to support the shop, as one respondent on Eigg noted:

But the really important thing – and again, this is, in part, being part of the community. You need to support your shop. It's like villages on the mainland. You know, you need to support your local shop and support your local post office and the local bank and things like that. Otherwise you lose them. So I think, I think it's important that people support the shop.

At other times, the importance of the shop was cited indirectly. For instance, when asked why a trust was working on new housing, one trust leader explained:

We have this balance of the socioeconomic. We want young families to come in with children to keep the school going. The people who live there will, you know, they'll still go to the shop. I think there's – it's all justifiable.

In this section, I detail how residents articulate the importance of shops, how various forms of collective action have been deployed to support them, and examine these shops as binding commons, which is to say as active agents in the construction of their communities.

Isle of Eigg Shop, Eigg

The shop on Eigg first opened as a co-op in the 1930s as part of a wave of cooperative organizing. In its initial operation, Eigg boasted the smallest co-op in Scotland, situated in a then-new building in the center of the island, along with a post office operating out of the same building. By the 1980s, the shop had become independent in operation but still sat in the un-electrified, un-plumbed building in the center of the island. Pleas by the shop owner for either building modernization or a lease to provide tenure security for improvements when unheeded by Schellenberg, the landlord, who reportedly liked the rustic feel of the old building. Subsequently as part of the first major project after the community buyout, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust built the new An Laimhrig building next to the pier to host, for the first time, a shop that featured running water, electric coolers and freezers, and toilets, as well as continued post office service.

The feeling of satisfaction on opening An Laimhrig, the new pier complex, on 12 June 1998 - the first anniversary of the buy-out, was tangible: here was the first concrete proof that community management could make a difference! Islanders and visitors alike loved it. . . . An Laimhrig soon became the new social focus for the community, especially the younger folk. (Dressler 2010, p195-196)

Community support for the shop did not end with providing an improved site for operations. Multiple businesses on the island refuse to take credit cards, and will instead direct people to withdraw money through the Royal Mail's electronic banking service in the shop, because the shop retains part of the fees charged in the withdrawal, thereby helping to support the post office service. Several of the self-catering¹⁶ holiday rentals on the island, in their promotional materials, encourage people to place advance orders at the shop in order

¹⁶ "Self-catering" is a common term in the UK, generally meaning a rental with some manner of kitchen facilities included, and without any kind of attached restaurant or room service.

to support its operations. Additionally, it is worth noting that while the “tea room”¹⁷ serves beer and wine by the drink, the small crowd of islanders which typically gathers outside the An Laimhrig building (“at the pier”) for an evening drink appeared to buy canned beers from the shop, and as such the shop also effectively served as the *de facto* bar for locals.

Overwhelmingly, everyone I spoke to on or off the record on Eigg spoke with warmth and praise for how well the shop was run and the ways in which the shop serves the community. During my fieldwork visit in 2018, the trust was in the process of evaluating plans for a major expansion of An Laimhrig, including a significant expansion in square footage for the Isle of Eigg Shop, as well as for the other two businesses operating out of the facility.

Further, on certain delivery days, the CalMac ferry from Mallaig only makes one stop on the island, so the delivery van which supplies the shop must come off the ferry, unload the merchandise, and get back on the ferry before it makes its departure. In order to expedite the process and to keep costs for the shop down, island residents will gather at the pier and help to unload the van into the shop.

Bacon: What can you tell me about the importance of the shop there? . . .

Respondent: Well, in many ways it’s a lifeline service. They keep uh, well, being a shop, any kind of a shop, you’ve got to have so much stuff that not everybody’s going to like, but uh, you got to cater for those other people as well. It’s also part of – kind of like a social hub as well. Because even when the tearoom isn’t open and so on, people will go over and just go to the shop. And see who else is there. And people will phone up and they’ll fire questions at them – did you see such and such and so on? . . . And of course, it’s the people on the island. When we get a delivery at the shop, whichever of the days it comes in – folk will all go out and help load things into the back of the shop. It’s not like when you go to the big supermarkets and the big truck is in the back there, and there’s a whole team of guys all – it’s like that on a

¹⁷ The formal name of the “tea room” is the Galmisdale Bay Cafe, which sells breakfast, lunch, afternoon drinks, and dinner upon request. However almost all islanders still refer to it as “the tea room.”

small scale. But it's the very people that live here that use the shop, that'll do the off-loading and everything else.

Bacon: So, you're not getting paid for any of that? You just show up and help un – offload it . . . well, let's just say, why do you do that?

Respondent: Well if you don't do it, and it's left to the person running the shop, you'll be there all day before you get anything out of the shop. So, it just makes common sense and — part of your community, so yeah, why not? You just make a chain, everybody kind of, you know, feeds the stuff along and it gets in a lot quicker.

While the collective unloading occurs today (I saw it happen personally), the process is shorter and simpler than it was before the building of the new ferry pier and the introduction of full car ferry service to the island. Previously, a small boat ran between the pier and the ferry, anchored at a short distance away from shore, which required considerably more effort for unloading. The following quote from a croft resident on his second stint living on the island addresses this, as well as the degree to which the common unloading process does and did serve to connect people to the community.

Interviewer: Do you feel personally connected to the community here on Eigg?

Respondent: To the community, yes. Um, we're a little physically distant, because we've chosen to live at the north end of the island . . . Um, and when we used to live here before, the, the, the, CalMac ferry came on. The larger pier was built in 2003. Um, I think there was more community cohesion, because, uh, it was a smaller community, and there had to be more cooperation. It wasn't nearly so much, uh, individual worth. People have got better off since the, the buyout, and, uh, and that's good, because that gives them more confidence.

Um, but now with the population up to a hundred and different people doing different things, there's a degree of independence, um, that a lot of people – so, so there isn't the need to cooperate, and it's simple things like unloading boats through human chains and things like that. There used to be a real part of living here. It was the only way to unload, because we used to have a boat, a flip boat, it was called. We used to have a small boat that would meet the big boat at sea, transfer freight and passengers at sea, and then come into the pier. And that would have to be unloaded.

Now we have a, uh, car ferry where a van comes off, and a van comes up the pier, and often it's unloaded by hand, but mostly unloaded – sometimes unloaded by forklift. Um, small things like that, and this, and the more independence – so this, there's still the ceilidhs and, and a, and good things for meeting socially, but we're, we're also very busy. And so I feel [*blows air*] I do feel a part of, part of the community, um, but I don't have a lot of interaction with sections of the community, because of our daily life.

Here, a question which starts out inquiring about a *feeling of being connected* to the community garners a response which winds through the shop, the cooperative labor of unloading the boat, the impact of improved economic conditions, business, and ultimately the ambivalence which comes from the loss of the need for that cooperative labor at the pier to support the shop. Notably, due to the inability (because of time constraints and distance from the pier) to participate in cooperative actions at the shop, the respondent now experiences a decrease in the feeling of connectedness to the full Eigg community. While this response ties in a number of themes, many others mentioned the shop in responses to questions about connection, importance, or community.

To recount, a number of community-related activities take place in the immediate environs of the shop and which occur in that space *because* of the presence of the shop. Alternately, in the terms of ANT, that the shop itself assembles these actors and and compels these activities to occur. I list these below and categorize them based on the categories of action above.

1. Most immediately, there are the *formal services* that the business of the Isle of Eigg Shop provides, which can be roughly delineated as the provision of food and other essential goods for island residents and visitors, along with the post office-related services such as mail, business parcel deliveries, and electronic banking. These are particularly notable in winter, when the ferry service is more limited and access to goods becomes more difficult. These are a form of *direct ties and actions*.
2. There are the various times that people gather around the shop, whether during ferry arrival and departure times or for late afternoon or evening drinks, where the

shop functions as a gathering place, thereby pulling residents together. This shows *direct ties* leading to *secondary ties*.

3. The shop as space can be the site of collective action while the shop business becomes the recipient of that action by residents, which allow for a particular kind of brief but important arrangement of unpaid labor to be inputted towards the vitality of an essential service. Here the direct and secondary ties lead to labor of *mutual reinforcement*.
4. The shop receives the indirect benefit from other businesses which direct economic activity from visitors to pass through the shop, whether in the form of the purchase of goods or the use of the electronic banking. Here the actions of *mutual reinforcement* lead to a growth, even if ephemeral in the case of visitors, in *direct ties*.
5. While the shop pays rent to the trust for the use of its building, the trust has shaped a series of decisions about investment in physical facilities around the vitality of the shop, from locating its first major project next to the pier to provisioning a new hydroelectric plant to power the facility to now expanding An Laimhrig with an eye specifically towards the expansion of the shop. The mutual reinforcement above continues to generate *common concern*.
6. Finally, residents express affective bonds to the shop, including pride in the collective trust construction of the facility, contentment at the services it offers, and from many respondents, concern for the continued operation of the shop due to the amount and difficulty of work required by the shopkeeper. All of the processes above have led to significantly stronger *direct ties*.

As such, the shop does not function as a classic commons *per se* in its first role of providing services. Use of the shop is not limited by any formal rule, but rather simply by its isolated geographic position; that is to say, no one goes all the way to Eigg just to go to the shop, however well run it may be. However, the shop demonstrates aspects of commoning in the informal ties and secondary uses which surround it, in which commons-like arrangements emerge in informal ties. Through these dynamics, the binding commons—which consists of not just the shop, tea room, and pier area, but also the informal arrangements of times of gathering, unloading the truck, and so forth—can now be seen to be *actively structuring* the forms of community on Eigg.

Dervaig Shop, Northwest Mull

Northwest Mull lacks the easy spatial definition of some of the other primary communities which I focus on in this study. The isle of Mull, the second largest of the Inner Hebrides by land area, has roughly 3000 people on it and its closely adjoined islands, including Iona and Ulva. Of that population, roughly 875 of which live in the northern part of Mull but not in the immediate area around Tobermory. That general area constitutes the main “catchment” region for the Northwest Mull Community Woodland Company, and most respondents defined roughly some subset of that as their community. Aside from the villages of Tobermory, which sits on the eastern coast of Mull, and Salen, which sits on the narrow strip of land which connects the northern Aros peninsula to the rest of Mull, the village of Dervaig is the largest settlement in the area and serves as the central focal point. As such, the only food store of any size in the north of Mull, outside of Tobermory, is the Dervaig PO and Stores which sits in the old village hall.

Advertised as 1,200 square feet, the shop offers, as the name implies, groceries as well as post office services. The shop sits in the former village hall, which the shop owner purchased from the village hall committee. As one Mull resident explained:

Respondent: That's quite an interesting story as well. Because the shop was very much smaller than it is now. And he rented the office, the space he occupied from the village hall committee because it had been a library at one time and part of the village hall. And then when they built the new hall it ceased to be used for that, so he opened the front of it as shop. And then he went back to the village hall committee and said could he rent the whole of the area behind it, which was a workshop. And turn it all into a proper shop, you know, a good size shop so it's more like a mini supermarket. And of course because it was community owned we had to have an open meeting where the community decided whether he was the right man to sell it to or not.

Bacon: So he purchased it out right.

Respondent: Well because he couldn't get the funding to develop it without owning it, so he purchased it outright on the condition that it would remain as a shop et cetera. I'm sure if he chose to overturn the conditions he probably could, but the community voted for him to have that right. Because they thought he was a good chap and would do the thing right, which is rather nice. So he got a lot of support to do that, so.

The shop owner's local connections, in this recounting, made a considerable difference in his ability to obtain the premises:

Bacon: So if he hadn't sort of had the goodwill of the community they probably would not have sold him that--

Respondent: They wouldn't have sold it, no, I mean they held a public meeting. Are we prepared to sell this to [the shop owner] or not? It was as simple as that.

Bacon: Is there any particular thing that made the community convinced that he was the right man?

Respondent: One, he'd been operating the shop for a while, and two, he was from the island. And three, his proposition made an awful lot of sense, you know, and we were suffering from the fact that it was as small as it was. And he couldn't hold the sort of stocks that were needed. So it worked for everybody frankly, and I forget how much he paid for it. It wasn't a great deal of money, but it injected a little bit of capital into the village hall in all.

The subject of the shop came up in speaking with speaking with another director of NWMCWT about the community purchase of Ulva and its connection to Mull. Again, an

articulation of commonality between Ulva and Mull came through an expression of usage of and support for institutions such as shops and schools:

Bacon: What is the connection between these pieces of land [Mull and Ulva] and the people living around them?

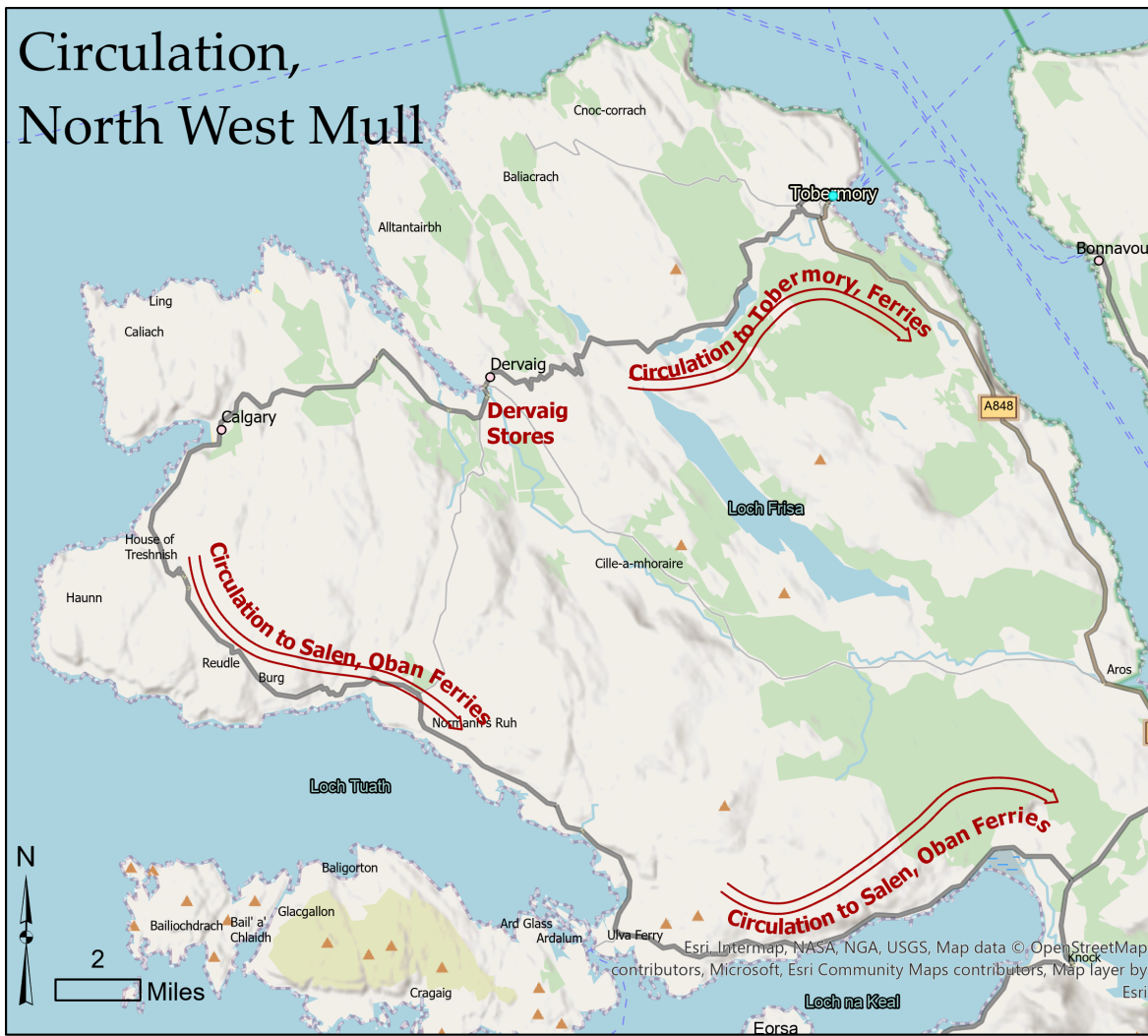
Respondent: . . . This has changed in my head slightly over the period since the beginning of it. But the more I think about it everything with, you know, it's just really the same land if you think, you know, anyone that's living on Ulva their kids will go to school in Mull. They'll do their shopping in Mull. They'll use all the infrastructure of Mull. . . . They travel through Mull there. And there is just this wee short strip of water that separates it and makes it this psychologically hugely different bit. But if you put 20 people on there and they're young economically active people with kids going to the school that's, that whole area is benefitted from it.

This same unity between Ulva and Northwest Mull was challenged by one of the few who had come to oppose the buyout who agreed to speak with me, specifically challenging the question of whether they would patronize the shop in Dervaig:

It's not like, it's not like uh, Eigg, where everybody would shop in there. And they would buy all that stuff from there. People there aren't— [The shop owner] complains here that in the winter people never go in his shop. They go to the mainland to Tescos and get it delivered. . . . You know, they don't go in his shop. . . . And he complains about it, you know, there is people here on the island who have never been up, in the village who have never been in his shop.

Notably missing, in contrast to respondents in other primary communities, was any comment about the function of the shop as gathering space. The Dervaig PO and Stores has visibly made an attempt at this, with a small seating area with a coffee bar inside. While the interview data do not speak as to why this aspect may be reduced in Northwest Mull, how Dervaig is situated in the greater area may provide an insight. The village sits at the head of a shallow inland sea loch which is not a major source for boat traffic. Of the primary roads meet in the general area of the village, one heads east across the island to the much larger village of Tobermory, and two cross the ridge to the west, one of those meeting the coast in the smaller village of Calgary and another (“the hill road”) which crosses a high ridgeline on

a more direct path towards Ulva Ferry. The road along the west coast from Calgary through Ulva Ferry then continues on and continues back to Salen. The result of this is that Dervaig is not, in Callon (1985)'s terms, a literal "obligatory passage point" for much of the population. While residents of Calgary pass through Dervaig to get to Tobermory, to get to the main ferry to Oban or even to Salen they can opt for the less hilly coastal road along the coast. The village of Dervaig and its anchor store struggles to *assemble* or to *collect* the fullness of the Northwest Mull population, and as such does not become the gathering point.



Ravenspoint Shop, Pairc

The primary shop in Pairc is one of the focal points of the Ravenspoint Centre in Kershader, a small crofting township among the first one passes on the single primary road into Pairc. The Ravenspoint facility itself came into being in the late 1970's when a the *Co-Chomunn Na Pairc* or Pairc Community Co-operative formed and purchased the closed primary school in Kershader. The co-op went through a number of different operations, from operating a salmon farm and hatchery in Loch Erisort, which sits just behind the building, to operating a small inn and store on a volunteer basis. In the mid 2000's, the organization elected to make significant operational changes. These changes, over the next 10 years, resulted in an expansion of the store to greater capacity, adding a cafe overlooking the loch at the rear of the building, creating a local museum, and the creation of a hostel and bunkhouse there. Further, the *co-chomunn* received funding to install two wind turbines which sit across the road from the old schoolhouse and installed gasoline and diesel pumps.





Doors of the shop at Ravenspoint

The *co-chomunn* now operates both the shop and the automotive fuel service at net losses, which are subsidized by profits made by the hostel and the wind turbines. In 2016 during my first fieldwork visit, the cafe included a full barista espresso machine, but just a

few weeks before my 2018 visit, the labor costs of keeping the cafe open with full service had caused the *co-chomunn* to shift to just basic coffee, tea, and a small number of wrapped pastries served on an honesty system, with a cash collection box set out on the counter¹⁸. The shop itself, by the admission of several respondents who have held recent leadership positions at the *co-chomunn*, is not run to maximize sales.

A director on the *co-chomunn* board who is heavily involved in running the shop explains when I asked about why keeping a shop there was important:

Well primarily we always, and I'm convinced now that is, you know, one of the last places in the area where people actually get to have a conversation with one another. And it's in a sense more important than the turnover. As I said, it wasn't from a business point of view. A shop down here makes no sense. But to be without it wouldn't necessarily be a question of where you get groceries. It would be a case of if a van comes down and . . . a van from Tesco's [laughter] is the only one left delivering groceries then how do you meet your neighbors and your friends. And where do you get together and where do you gather. And. . . the shop still answers a lot of that. Can't be without out it.

Another director of the *co-chomunn*, speaking in the same interview, followed up:

I mean i-i-it's very convenient but, uh, to know that you can just pop up the road to get something. And in the past this area used to be served by a number of grocery vans. So individuals had their own businesses and it was like mobile shops. . . . However, the profile of the community and the life of the community has changed in that time as well. And we're very much a commuting community now. Um, people commute to town, to Stornoway and elsewhere for work. So the majority of people in the community will do most of their shopping in Stornoway. And Tesco, the big supermarket chain, they also do a home delivery service which has really taken off here.

No idea how they pay for it, but you meet Tesco vans constantly and it's a fantastic service. So the way we've turned that to our benefit is that we now use that service to supply and stock the shop. And it's a very good service. It's definitely better than what we had before. Because we're able to keep much more control over the quality of what we receive. . . . So we've turned that kind of what was becoming a really big challenge to us. . . .

¹⁸ While it had been a recent change in 2018, it was not entirely unexpected. During my 2016 visit, in an unrecorded conversation with one of the directors, they cited the difficulty of covering costs with sales in the cafe and told me, "Michael, never open a cafe, that's my advice to you."

But yeah . . . We're really a corner shop. I think that's the best way. You know, if you were in an urban environment you would be a corner shop where people poke them for one or two things so supplement what they've got as well.

And in reality I think people—and I was one of those—really like the idea of a shop. They want it to be there when they need it. And I think a lot of them believe they use it a lot more than they do [laughter]. You know so we've got a core group of customers and then we've got an awful lot of people who, you know, occasionally drop in.

And so yeah. But I think, you know, everybody, I mean we're increasingly seeing that kind of sense now and that people talk about Ravenspoint as a kind of generic center or focus, you know for stuff happening in the community.

Another Pairc resident emphasized the meeting point aspect when asked about the importance of the shop:

We've always had a shop in the area, but due to—you know, whether it's viable to have it or not, it—at one point it was just selling cigarettes and newspapers, whereas now it's a proper little mini supermarket. . . . But the people who work there, they don't just work in the shop, it performs a lot of functions of passing on news, social interaction for people.

Especially in quiet villages, you know, coming in to get their newspapers every day is the only contact that people have outside of their, you know, household sphere. Um, so it's very good for that. There's a café that's more sort of a—it's going a bit more self-service now. Um, but it's a place for people to meet.

A director of the Pairc Trust, whose offices now sit in a new Trust-owned building directly behind the Ravenspoint center, emphasized this aspect:

Respondent: The shop is absolutely critical for the area. It's a center for people to go in and – you know, something simple as see notices that are put up. . . . A lot of people, uh, have Facebook nowadays. I don't. . . . So if you've got Facebook, you get to see these notices, if you don't have Facebook, you don't know anything about them until the event is past. It's a place to meet. Uh, but . . . to me, it's an essential thing to help keep the community together.

The shop needs all the assistance it can get to help make it viable, uh, and I . . . It's barely viable at the moment. . . .

Interviewer: Just playing devil's advocate and say if it's not viable, why should it be there?

Respondent: Well, maybe financially it shouldn't be there, but for the good of our community it has to be there, in my view.

Interviewer: And why is that?

Respondent: To help – as-as the focal point, um, uh, to help . . . If the shop wasn't there, there would be only – then there would be the various meetings that would be

on in the district throughout the year, that you would meet people from other parts of this district. So, uh, I believe it's, uh, vitally important that the shop and petrol pumps is there to help retain people in the district, to help retain young families, to help encourage other families to come into the district. . . .

And, uh, keeping people in the district and trying to encourage people, other people, to come into the district would be an even more difficult job than what it is. . . .

And it's one of the things that Paic Trust is very much, uh, keen to do, is create employment, um, create housing, uh, to encourage more and more people to come in here to – that hopefully will support the school and the shop, and whatever.

One respondent noted that the shop gathered more people during the point in the afternoon when the newspaper deliveries arrived at the shop, meaning that there was a brief rush at the shop during that period.

In addition to shared goals (and director of the *co-chomunn* having an *ex officio* seat on the Paic Trust board), the actions of the Trust and the *co-chomunn* also overlap. At the time of fieldwork, the Trust had recently started leasing a plot of land to a local association, largely of retired women, to keep and maintain a polytunnel¹⁹ garden, which they in turn sold through the shop. Directors at the *co-chomunn* told me that the products grown there (and from other local small growers) were largely more of a cost to include than they brought in in revenue, because of the red tape involved in selling them, but that they saw it as part of the co-op's community mission.

Finally, it is worth noting that directors at the *co-chomunn* end up operating as *de facto* managers of the shop because revenue is insufficient to hire full time management. One director told me she was surprised to find out when she first came on board that not only were directors putting in long volunteer hours, they were donating personal funds to help keep the co-op afloat. A focus of the recent changes has been to make operations self-

¹⁹ A "polytunnel" is any greenhouse-like structure covering open soil and sheathed with clear plastic ("poly") for the purposes of extending the growing season by protecting plants. These are sometimes called "hoop houses" in American English.

sufficient, requiring fewer grants as well as fewer local donations, but the input of volunteer hours remains high, largely from directors themselves.

SPAR Lochinver, Flossie's Beach Shop, Drumbeg Stores, Assynt

The Assynt area has three stores, ranging in size, which stock some manner of essentials. The largest and primary store in Assynt carries the SPAR chain logo and is located in the center of the primary village of Lochinver. Two other stores sit in the townships of the North Assynt Estate, held by the Assynt Crofters Trust. The moderately sized Drumbeg Stores anchors the village of Drumbeg, along with the Drumbeg Hotel. The very small Flossie's Beach Shop sits just on the other side of a campground from Clachtoll beach, directly facing the main road through the estate.

The SPAR in Lochinver would be called a "mini-supermarket," aiming to carry most essential goods. In contrast to the positive affect residents in other communities used for their stores, comments about the SPAR were widely negative upon respondents. The following was typical:

Interviewer: And can you – how does [the SPAR] meet the needs of the community, would you say?

Respondent: Just about. I mean there's a lot of pre-packed, um, pizzas and food. The vegetables come in – they're not good. They're limp. They do make, for instance, croissants for breakfast. But you can get them at 11:00. So if you were there at 8:00, um, with the North Coast 500, a lot of it just gets cleared out. It struggles. I mean I'm very glad it's there. You can get your pint of milk or your coffee or whatever. But it – it's limited.

In the years shortly before my fieldwork, the freestanding post office in Lochinver closed and was absorbed into the SPAR. As discussed above, this led to some degree of sadness about the loss of the gathering place (along with its cat), but also frustration because the SPAR was owned by the Vestey family. The Vestey brothers, heirs to the Vestey frozen food

fortune, had previously owned all of Assynt and still own large sections of property, including several key properties in Lochinver including the SPAR as well as the gas station attached to it.

One respondent was diplomatic in attempting to explain the emotional position of the community in general, acknowledging the difficulty of running the shop:

Bacon The post you said had closed and has moved into the SPAR

Respondent: Yeah.

Bacon: Tell me, what effect that move has had.

Respondent: It's, there's – generally people's heart sank, because the SPAR shop is still owned by the big family that used to –

Bacon: The Vestey's.

Respondent Yes. And they own the post – the petrol station. I mean I don't mind – I don't think they do a very good – they're probably very good. They don't do a very good job at promoting what they do do well. They're of the old school. They keep a low profile, low publicity.

But actually I don't. I mean maybe the post, the petrol station costs them money. I don't know. But it's a facility there that's provided by a private person. Presumably it must make sense. But there's a feeling with the post office and the Vestey's, there is still a legacy of, oh, they're the big land owner

. . . So it was just a feeling with the post office. Oh my God, it's now gone back into the SPAR shop. I mean it could have stood on its own . . .

Other respondents were considerably less diplomatic.

Bacon: Talk briefly about the SPAR or any other shops that are on—where you would buy groceries or any other things.

Respondent: Well, I've just been to Ullapool this morning to go shopping; of course the cost. The SPAR is a constant thorn in the flesh really. There's a whole aisle of biscuits and a whole aisle of booze and then very little food and it's still run by the Vestey's, by the way, who used to own this estate.

Bacon: Do you think those are related?

Respondent: Well, they're in the grocery business one way or another; I don't know why we don't get Tesco and deliveries here because they work everywhere else but I've got a feeling there's some sort of stitch-up going there. Our other shop is Inver Park Stores [on the adjacent peninsula of Coigach], which is marginally better. They used to have loose vegetables but everything is coming packaged.

One of the more complimentary comments came from Marianne Simpson, co-owner of Flossie's Beach Store in Clachtoll, whose comments also illustrate the dynamics of running a shop in Assynt:

Bacon: You – you owe a store, so I'm obviously asking a little bit about the competition, but can you tell me a little bit about the Spar?

M. Simpson: Um, yeah. I mean, the SPAR, um, is – it – it's a great shop. I shop in the Spar many a time. Um, and it's had a lot of refits. It's had to up its game a lot, but I think a lot of that is down to the NC500. They've had to up their game. I – I'm not any serious competition to anybody around here. [Laughter] I'm too small, um, but at the same time it's maybe I make people think twice a little. Some people who maybe used to go to the SPAR to get their shopping maybe aren't going to the Spar to get their shopping now, if they can get it from me. But you know, that's just the way of things. You can't really call somebody competition if they're six miles away. It's different if I was, like, just along the road, but I'm not.

Bacon: But do you think people– do most people who live around here, do they get most of their shopping from the Spar? Or do they then continue on to–

M. Simpson: A lot of them go down to either Ullapool or Inverness, depending on if they're doing a big shop.

Bacon: That's a long way all the way to Inverness

M. Simpson: It is. Most people– my mom, she'll go to Inverness every week on a Friday. Um, and she gets her big shop. It's only her and my dad. I don't know why she needs a big shop, um, but she'll collect [overlapping noise] things that you can't do here.

Bacon: So it's that much cheaper that it's worth the whole drive all the way down?

M. Simpson: I don't think it is. I think it's just that she wants to get out of the house. [Laughter] I think it's an excuse to get away for the day

Flossie's Beach Store, at the other end of the spectrum, is run out of a small corrugated shed with two windows and a door. The store had been re-opened in the mid 2010's by Simpson and her partner Clive, after a period of dormancy following the original Flossie's passing. The shop offers basic perishable goods, a few gifts, and prepared sandwich rolls.



Flossie's Beach Shop, 2016, photo by Marianne Simpson, used with permission

Interview respondents who lived in Lochinver or in the southern parts of Assynt did not make note of Flossie's but those who lived on the North Assynt Estate spoke almost uniformly enthusiastically about the store and emphasized its importance to the community, both for the service it offers and as a gathering space.

Well, Flossie's has been a phenomenal success. Open for three years, I think. And just sort of gets bigger and better, not physically but um – although it could do with doing that. But just with the Wi-Fi, with the weather, the tables, again, it's a fantastic meeting place, um, for local people and visitors alike. Um, you can see immediately

the car there, and if you want to stop, think of reason to go and buy something, because you know you want to speak to that person.

So it is a meeting place without a doubt. It's terrific. And great also, she's open in the winter. You don't have to drive to Lochinver to get milk. It's fantastic. So that's been terrific.

Another respondent echoed the sentiment:

So-so we need, we-we need a community, we need shops. Uh, and I don't know if you've passed Flossie's during the course of a day, but there are usually a group of people sitting outside. That's what I mean by a community. It's like a bar. Like, in Drumbeg there's a hotel, there's a bar. People go there. That's a marker of a community.

Simpson herself echoed the importance of the store as not just a gathering place but as a site of sharing information:

Bacon: What role does it play in the community?

M. Simpson: Um, I think it's become a bit of an institution. It – it's the one place where you can – you can go if you need to know something. If I don't already know it, I can find out. Um, any events that are going on – if somebody's died, if somebody's had a baby – plus in the evenings, um, and right through the winter too the older folk will phone out, and I'll do deliveries on the way home. So it's also a way of checking to make sure everybody's okay and getting their shopping. It's just become a very – a very community-spirited shop, I think is the way to put it.

Notably, Simpson herself holds a crofting tenancy on the estate in addition to operating Flossie's, which she also leases from the estate. In discussing the conditions of her tenancy, Simpson noted her ties as a crofter and her involvement in the trust, particularly through the common concern of sheep:

Bacon: Do you have any interactions with the trust as a – as a shop owner?

M. Simpson: Yeah, I do. Um, well, the trust has asked me to – I'm – I'm part of the licensing for the *feis* [festival] they're having this year, because I have a personal license for alcohol. Um, my license is going to be used for the event, so . . .

Bacon: Do you think being a crofter yourself helps manage that relationship with the trust – that you're a bit more tied in?

M. Simpson: Yeah, I think so. Um, I'm not sure why, but I – I think because anybody else who's on the – in the – involved in the trust, you have this common bond of sheep.

Bacon: Common bond of sheep?

M. Simpson: Yeah, it's a common bond of sheep.

Simpson further explained:

M. Simpson: You can tell any day of the week, any of the other crofters that come in, the first thing we'll ask if what are you doing with sheep today – because everybody's working on sheep all year round, almost. So people are getting ready to start clipping now – starting to clip now because it's so warm. . . . you'll see somebody that's got their sheep gathered. Now, what are you doing with your sheep today? That's the first thing that we all ask each other, is what we're doing with the sheep, over and above anything else.

Bacon: So you just – if somebody comes into the shop and says what are you doing with the sheep –

M. Simpson: Yeah, have you dosed yours yet? Yeah? No? When are you doing yours? Next week? Okay.

Bacon: So . . . the conversation about sheep means that there's – you're in on a conversation there that, um – and then therefore if you have something you need from the trust, you've already talked about sheep. You can talk about something else.

Marianne: Yeah.

Bacon: Interesting. And where do those conversations tend to happen?

M. Simpson: Here.

Bacon: At the shop?

M. Simpson: Or outside. You meet people in the car. You stop and have a blether, and you'll talk about sheep.

Bacon: Like – like driving past?

M. Simpson: Yeah, yeah. And then you get annoyed, because there's loads of tourists behind you waiting to get past – but I'm talking about my sheep. [Laughter]

Bacon: Um, does the community – does the fact that it's community-owned change the way you operate this shop specifically, other than what we just talked about?

M. Simpson: No, I don't think it does. Um, I'm not sure if it was operated any differently before the buyout than it does now. I suppose the only person that could answer that was Flossie, and she's no longer with us. She could tell you what it was like before, but, uh, no, I don't think it's been – the trust itself isn't involved in any way, really, with the shop.

This inclusion in community again emerged later in the interview when I asked about tenure security, a major motivation in many forms of land reform:

Bacon: Do you have any concerns about tenure security with your croft, or with your shop, or [other enterprises]?

M. Simpson: No, I don't. No, I don't think so, I think because – because I'm part of the community, I'm part of – I'm part of the trust, but I don't feel that – but then it – it all depends on who is running the trust at the time. It changes depending on who's behind the scenes.

Through the (admittedly long) series of quotes above, the shop is clearly seen assembling people in the sharing of news, information, and the creation of common bonds (along with the sheep), which then develops a sense of embeddedness in the community, which in turn translates to a (possibly ephemeral) security of tenure.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, one outcome of combining the landscape inventory methodologies with interviews is that elements of the landscape that appear as though they might be significant to a visitor such as myself disappear from narratives of community in interviews with residents. Drumbeg Stores in the crofting village of Drumbeg falls squarely into this category. While not a large store, the building sits prominently above the road near the crest of a prominent hill in the village, with a small outside garden seating area looking out over the Drumbeg township common grazings to the south. Inside, the store has a small delicatessen-style counter, some fresh produce, several coolers, and a large selection of gifts and other visitor information. Along the road, a sandwich board advertises that the store sells Arran Ice Cream.

Very few respondents, however, mentioned the store at all, including one resident who primarily lives in Drumbeg. Marianne Simpson, owner of Flossie's, noted that Drumbeg Stores has a similar postboard for community notices as hers, and:

They do deliveries to people, except theirs is mostly maybe tourist-based rather than local-based.

Another respondent who lives not far from Drumbeg who, after an extensive detailing of Flossie's, had this to say about Drumbeg Stores:

I'm not sure. I think you'd have to ask somebody else. But I mean the previous owners, it was the best village shop in Scotland at one point. It was fantastic, the delicatessen. And they still have good things in there.

One of the operators of Drumbeg Stores politely decline my request to interview them, simply saying that because their store sat on private land now, "The Assynt Crofters Trust has nothing to do with me." As such, in the case of Drumbeg Stores, a peculiar absence of information appears on both sides. As with all of these instances, I can only speculate as to why the owners regarded the community owners of almost all the land on all sides of them as "nothing to do with me" or why residents who could describe Flossie's and the SPAR in great detail had almost nothing to say about the shop in Drumbeg. Regardless of the reasons, however, the appearance from the data I gathered is that Drumbeg does not function as a binding commons, at least for the community of crofter owners of the Assynt Crofters Trust.

The three stores of Assynt then present three very different profiles in the degree to which they perform as binding commons. One, the SPAR, is an object of concern but the affect towards it is one of frustration. A second, Flossie's, clearly performs the work of binding and information sharing, and residents roundly express positive affect towards it and readily name specifics. A third, Drumbeg Stores, seems to disappear from the dynamics of community, with deferrals coming from both community members and operators. In each instance, the sources of these affects are, by at least one party, connected to the terms of ownership and tenure of the physical facilities of the shops.

Discussion

Multiplicities of binding commons

While my intent in the latter half of this chapter has been to narrowly focus on a single form of binding commons, the community shop, in multiple situations it was impossible to fully tell the stories of their work as community infrastructure without other binding commons budging into the narrative. On Eigg, respondents discussed the store in the same sentences with the tea room and pier facilities that are clustered together at An Laimhrig, as well as the community hall just up the hill. On Pairc, the polytunnel association, a binding commons in its own right, was associated with the shop. At Flossie's, the "common bond of sheep" pointed directly to the their importance in mediating a binding commons relationship.

This topology of relationships is neither surprising nor out of step with the empirical requirements for a model of community. Communities contain sub-communities, and no community is strictly mononucleic. As such, in the next chapter as I move towards case studies in the deployment of community infrastructure, multiple binding commons will often make an appearance in a single articulated narrative.

Community infrastructure

In the framework discussed above, I identify four constitutional elements in the assembly and constitution of community within a binding commons. Those four—matters of common concern, direct ties and actions, secondary ties and actions, and mutual

reinforcement—provide the necessary framework for a wider array of actions, ties, and internal and external effects, which I detail below. I refer to this framework as community infrastructure, in the sense that Star's boundary object provides.

In considering these examples of community shops as binding commons and their function in providing community infrastructure, I here discuss some of the work that community infrastructure can be seen to be doing²⁰. Notably these actions happen both *internally* in the community, such as actions of maintenance and care or of provision of information, as well as *external* to the community, such as reaches for formality.

Binding, differentiation, and boundaries

As the name implies, one of the functions that the binding commons does is the work of *binding*, and closely related work of differentiation and boundary-setting. As noted above in the empirically derived pre-requisites, communities are not infinite in scale, and most present some strong if not absolute sense of interiority and exteriority, or of membership and non-membership. The binding commons provides the infrastructure which binds members together, and in so doing, provides an implicit boundary definition.

In particular, examples from Eigg show that even without any particular design or intent for inclusion and exclusion, the activities which the binding commons assembles begin to define an implicit internality and externality to subsections of the community. Just as one respondent on Eigg described above how living at the northern end of the island and being

²⁰ I note here that many of the actions, ties, and effects that I articulate under community infrastructure have strong analogs in Ostrom's catalog of design principles of long-running common pool resource management regimes. This is not coincidental, but I have at this point abstained from articulating a map between these effects and Ostrom's design principles.

too busy to participate in activities at the southern end, around the shop and pier, leads to a decreased feeling of connectedness to parts of the community, the following quote shows

how patterns of life in space and time begin to structure community around the pier:

Bacon: What parts of the community would you say you're most strongly connected to?

Respondent: Uh, can you explain that a bit more?

Bacon: Well, coming from an outsider, you know . . . there's a big ridge running down the middle of the island. Does that divide the community at all? Is there a Cleadale side and a Galmisdale side sort of -

Respondent: Yes, definitely. We call that the dark side.

Bacon: The dark side?

Respondent: They don't get the uh, sun in the morning. Um, yeah definitely, but it's not a serious divide; it's one that people joke about. . .

I mean for example, because we live this side and we work this side, we don't get over that often, so when we do, it feels like a holiday, it feels like were in a whole new place despite it still being the same, tiny island. Um, you know, the little groups of houses where people live. You might see more of those people, just from the nature of where you are. Um - there's a nice community - now, we're down here every day, first thing in the morning before anyone else gets here. Stewart in the tearoom is down there. [unintelligible name] will be here from the pier, the shop people will be here early. . . . And we all, you know, have a cup of tea in the morning, then just chat about business and how many people coming in that day.

It's uh - and that's really nice. It's a like a little pier club community. And it's not a community that excludes people, it's just we happen to be here, you know, every morning before people get here and that's nice. Um, you know, in terms of places, the hall is important to me because um, a couple of years ago when I wanted start fitness classes, I could run them up at the hall and it's nice to see how that's grown and how much more we're doing up there.

And further:

Respondent: It's funny because, getting back to that split, that said, it's a jokey one, but people on the Cleadale side all say they get the sunsets and we get the sunrises so, you know, people over here tend to be - I'm not going to say tend to be - a lot of people here get up early in the morning. Part of it is because we work over here. But you just can't help it.

Bacon: So, it's like morning people and the night people?

Respondent: Yeah.

The binding commons of the pier area, including the shop as well as the other businesses and the transportation facilities, shows up here doing the specific work of assembling and binding. Importantly, as the respondent points out, there's no particular mechanism of exclusion which is actively designed to differentiate people. The differentiators here are where someone lives, where they work, and how early they like to get up.²¹ What forms is a "little pier club community" that is assembled by the binding commons of the pier through job status, activity preferences, and living situation, which become self-reinforcing via positive feedback between them.

Information and work

Just as Star's boundary object generate "boundary infrastructures" which fulfill information and work needs (Star 2010, 602), the stores in this work can be seen facilitating both exchange of information and the provision of volunteer, collective, or informal labor. Multiple residents of Pairc cited the Ravenspoint store as more important as a source of mutual sharing of news and information about local events than it was as a store, to the point that directors will spend dozens of hours a week in volunteer labor to keep it open. Likewise the pier area on Eigg is the epicenter of the local grapevine, and also the point at which collective labor actions occur, such as unloading the grocery supply van.

A critically important form of this which is facilitated by a binding commons is the move towards what STS scholars call *closure* on both information and work. "Closure" refers to the

²¹ The dramatic central ridgeline of the island, the open exposure to the sea, and Scotland's northerly latitude mean this is not as trivial a concern as it might sound. Houses on the "light side" may have bright sun shining in their windows at 3 AM in mid-summer, while houses on the "dark side" may not see direct sunshine until noon in mid-winter. So, while I am sure many other concerns influence where people live, it would not be at all surprising if many residents had made part of those decisions based on what time of day they preferred to be active.

settling of controversies in form of technology or settlement of fact, to the point that the prior open controversies or forms may seem to disappear into a "black box," such that the now-closed form appears to have been inevitable or obvious. The positive reinforcement cycles tend to, over time, favor certain forms of ties and actions over others. A signature example of this is the evolution of the kinds of activities supported by the *Co-chomunn na Pairc* at the Ravenspoint center, which has eliminated its fish farm and hatchery business from its early days, and more recently has closed down the full barista service at the Ravenspoint cafe. In the meantime, the hostel has received improvements in order to increase revenue, while the shop received greater space and subsidy from the other businesses because of its importance as a gathering place. Similarly, the village hall committee in Dervaig is able to make the decision to sell the old village hall to the shop owner, rapidly moving through a potential controversy to a decision. As such, a critical part of the governance of binding commons structures remains ability to reach a kind of community closure. In terms of information, this emerges in the community establishment of *facts*, and in terms of work, it emerges in *artifacts*. These actions will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.

Regulation, formality, and enterprise

Closely related to the moves towards closure are long-term evolutions towards more well-defined systems. As an example, the Ravenspoint shop, which was once run on a volunteer basis, now employs staff and works more with national distributors. On Eigg, the establishment of a fully electrified store at An Laimhrig required the provision of a hydroelectric generator, which became the first trust-run step towards the now famed Eigg

renewable electric grid. This consequently required allocations of how much electricity any given residence or business can consume, formalizing and aligning rules by which appropriators must abide.

The move from the An Laimhrig hydroelectric generator and the Eigg Electric grid shows another closely related action, that of generating enterprise. By establishing a community infrastructure along which these actions may occur, binding commons facilitate expansion of existing ventures and the generation of new ones. In Paicr, the polytunnel association emerged partially as a means for residents (particularly older women) to have an activity for getting together and engaging in a common interest, but it was facilitated by the availability of the shop for sales and by the Paicr Trust for land.

Maintenance and care

As touched on in Chapter 2, acts of maintenance and care, much like infrastructure, are notable for their criticality as well as their invisibility. Community infrastructure, in many ways, means that the demands for maintenance and care move more rapidly through the community to parties which can address them, and then subsequently move labor and resources to the site where they are needed. These actions may be hidden in their regularity and smallness of scale, but simple motions like the referrals by other Eigg businesses to conduct both food purchases and electronic transfers through the shop help to allow for the ongoing operation of the post office, funding its maintenance by the shop owner.

Deployment of community infrastructure

The production of the infrastructure to facilitate these actions—binding, provision of information and work, closure, regulation, formality, enterprise, maintenance, and care—forms a critical step in linking the transition to community ownership to the provision of positive outcomes on these estates. The following chapter will take the frameworks developed in this chapter and deploy them to illustrate and assess a range of actions by community trusts.

Local Facts

Introduction

In conducting the field interviews for this study, the longest and most interesting stretches of the interviews involved respondents telling me about their involvement in a trust effort to solve a thorny local project or bring a tricky project to completion. While engaging, this made many of these narratives difficult to encode. Standard qualitative analysis finds recurring themes in interviews and texts that illustrate difference across categories, but while analyzing these texts, I struggled to make headway in breaking them down by type. In one case, the Assynt Crofters Trust was in a dispute about deer numbers with Scottish Natural Heritage. In another, the Assynt Foundation had built a wood chip boiler that couldn't be used. Farther south, Eigg had a new tree nursery and was debating allowing a salmon farm to operate off its shores. The Pairc Trust had a group of women growing fruit in polytunnels. The choice of projects, their relative success, and the means by which they were brought to completion were all deeply tied up in local conditions. Different personalities, groups of people working together, technologies deployed, prior local work on smaller projects, and specific frustrating factors all shaped the trajectories of these narratives. The specific relationship between community and ownership of the land frequently appeared in these narratives, but never in exactly the same way.

What allowed me to finally begin to make sense of all of these stories as similar phenomena was understanding these narratives as pointing to a kind of *social production of*

local facts. By "production of local facts" I mean what at a distance looks like two different processes—on the one hand, decision making and problem solving to execute projects, and on the other hand, establishing reliable knowledge about local conditions—but *in situ* the processes are effectively identical. This chapter follows several narratives which respondents provided through the negotiation of establishing these facts. In that way it is less tightly structured than previous chapters. I note, however, that in some ways the progression of the empirical chapters of this dissertation is slightly backwards. My motivation in developing the articulation of landscape in Chapter 4 and the model of community infrastructure in Chapter 5 was, in large part, to develop a theoretical framework capable of spanning the narratives here. I rely here on long quotes from interviewees because these narratives often occupied not just the largest portion but also the most rich and intricate parts of the interviews.

Importantly, because these narratives from different respondents wind through entirely different incidents, in many cases I did not have the resources to gain other perspectives or verify specifics. The data presented here, therefore, should be understood as *collected narrative* as presented to me, and not as a verified account of the incidents recounted. In most of the longer narratives, I have attempted to validate the basic elements of the story. However, several of these stories recount moments of controversy and conflict with other community and state actors. In many cases, my interviews were not extensive enough to get multiple perspectives on the events described.

Instead, these narratives reliably relay stories of community infrastructure fulfilling information and work needs. Through that process, community infrastructure can here be seen *closing* controversies around local facts while also *re-opening* previously established

facts. Once again, the "facts" here being established may refer to phenomena as broad as knowledge held by the state, common understanding held by the community, constructed aspects of the environment, or the enacting of policy around any of these. This extended introductory section recounts the relevance of the "factor" on the rural Scottish estate, and its connection to land ownership. Beyond the handy homonymic relation between "factor" and "fact," understanding the factor's role illustrates what "fact production" can mean here. I examine specific effects of binding and the production of inclusion and exclusion, both in terms of actors and in terms of the capacity for speech to be received in community infrastructure. I then go further into detail in stories specifically from Eigg and Assynt, the twin cradles of the Scottish community buyout movement. In these stories, the greater length of time allows for a better review of how community infrastructure changes community and land over time.

Situating ownership

The previous chapter focused on a comparative analysis of a particular form of the binding commons—the local community store. In this chapter, I follow broader trajectories of the community buyouts and community land trusts by detailing how binding commons emerge, grow, and evolve, generating and feeding off of community infrastructure as they do so. In this process, I return to a central concern of this study: how does the change in ownership produce such a wide array of divergences from private ownership? Notably, ownership as a relation *per se* does not show up as a critical element in the model of the binding commons which I propose in the previous chapter. How can the community

infrastructure produced by binding commons explain a change in outcomes under community ownership if ownership is not part of the model?

Part of the answer to this lies in a more close examination of the buyout histories in the focal areas of this study. In each case, the emergence of community efficacy does not *begin* with the buyout, but rather exists in some form, often in a smaller but still formalized roll, before the buyout occurs. The change in ownership then opens the pathway for the community infrastructure to be more robustly deployed in the management of an estate. In so doing, the relationship of ownership can be incorporated into community ownership itself, making the work of managing the estate its own form of binding commons which can then become stitched into a broader community infrastructure.

This puts specific importance, then, on the mechanisms and actors involved in estate management, including community-owned but also private and state-held estates. If community infrastructure changes management practices on community-owned estates, the question arises of what management practices they are replacing. By examining the standard mechanisms by which private landowners seek to advance their ownership interests in the management of their own estates, this work can more fully connect the changes under community land ownership with community infrastructure. To do this, in the next section I will focus on the local agent responsible for representing the interests of the landowner.

The factor

Gordon Robertson, the executive officer for the Assynt Foundation at the time I interviewed him, was close to retiring from a career as what is formally known as a charter

surveyor, under which he worked for a series of estates in the Scottish highlands. Informally, the position is almost uniformly referred to in Scotland as the "factor." The position may be understood best in American terms as a property manager, but this lacks the historical connotations that come associated with the factor as the continuation of a long-standing traditional role. In my interview with him, Robertson told me the following story in a bit of self-deprecating humor, talking about his role in his career as a factor and the cultural weight that came with that title:

I mean if I can tell you an example of it, when I worked for the Thane of Cawdor, as in Macbeth and whatever, the Cawdor estate, and I worked from '92 to the turn of the century. . . . On the first day [at the new job] I had to do a rent review. There were 58 let farms on the estate. And the night before, I'd seen, there was a television program about the potato famine in Ireland and the opening scene was a factor—I was called a factor—riding through on his horse, and everyone rushed to him, grabbed the factor, dragged him from his horse and drowned him in the puddle.

So I had to turn up in this farmhouse. And I appeared, and the tenant farmer said to me, "oh, you see the program last night, Mr. Robertson?" He said – and he said, "let me tell you a story about a factor." And I said okay. He said, "well, there's a farmer sitting in his front room and he's got the bank manager, the accountant, and the factor sitting in front of him, and he has a gun and two bullets. And he can use them any way he likes. Mr. Robertson, are you listening to what I'm saying?" [laughs]

"So he loads the gun, Mr. Robertson, and what do you think he does? Shoots the factor straight away. And thinks, that's fine, okay, that's fine. And he loads again, thinks for a moment, shoots the factor again, just to make sure."

So I get the message. So I changed my name to general manger after that! [laughs]

As the farmer's story expresses, the bankers and the accountants may be hated figures on rural estates, but the resentment towards the factor, generally speaking, surpassed them all. While on many Scottish estates the landlord has become an increasingly distant figure, the factor, by contrast, traditionally lives either on the estate or near it. The factor's role at all times is to represent the interests of the owner, including reporting on the status of the estate to the owner, recommending certain management options to the owner, enacting the owner's decision, and working out and implementing the finer details of management. In

this, the factor is responsible for the owner's interests on the land both in external and in internal matters. Externally, the factor responds to legal structures and state actions as well as market dynamics. Internally, the human population, biota, buildings, infrastructure, and other occupiers of the land are managed, added, and removed via regulation.

In this interaction, the factor has the dual role of collecting, reporting, and interpreting information about the state of the estate to the land owner, and at the same time, managing and altering that state to further the owner's interest. It is the factor, on most estates, who enacts decisions such as leases, expenditures on maintenance of structures, rent levels, evictions, demolitions, approving new construction, and so forth. The factor was often the visible face of the forced dispossessions of the Clearances through this role. Even after the Clearances, factors continue to negotiate leases, contracts, planning approvals, and other details of land management. In contemporary Scotland, the job of the factor—or again by its formal title, the charter surveyor—is a fully professionalized position with educational degree tracks, certifications, and trade organizations.

Etymologically, the Oxford English Dictionary cites near exact cognates in Middle French and Latin for the origin of the term, with the Latin *factor* meaning "maker, portrayer, perpetrator" and the Middle French, "agent who . . . transacts business for another, maker, creator, performer." The Latin noun is derived from a stem of the verb *facare*, or to make, do, or become, an etymology which "factor" shares with many related modern English words, not least "manufacture," "artifact," and of course, "fact."

While etymological association is not a sufficient grounding for theory, it is a rather notable signpost pointing back not just to shared denotative meaning, but to shared connotative meaning as well. Bruno Latour is fond of the pithy French pun on the matter,

"les faits sont faits," which loses some of its punnery in translation, but in literal meaning it is closest to "facts are made," or closer to the original pun, "facts are manufactured." The pun has more significance than just passing cleverness—it points to the common origin of the words, which in French are homonyms and whose common roots show up in English between the words "facts" and "manufacture" or "factory." "Facts," as Latour and others point out, historically emerges not from science or philosophy but from courts of law, where a "fact" is something which has been established as beyond dispute by the present parties within the proceedings of the court. Notably, the court in general is not interested in simply the production of facts, but rather on settling facts so that they may be deployed in resolving questions in legal dispute.

Moreover, as I quoted in Chapter 3, Katherine McKittrick's statement that the production of knowledge and the production of space are inseparable, here both collapse back into a single figure in the management of the rural estate. The production of official information about the land and the enactment of initiatives and decisions about the land are made in the selfsame job. The factor's role, put most simply, is the production of social, legal, material, and spatial facts.

Under community ownership, the role of the factor either shifts or splinters. On several trusts I visited, employees of the trust with titles such as general manager, development manager, or secretary still did at least some of the work of the factor. However, in all of these cases, collective decision making arrangements among boards of directors and via community input venues operated above and around staff on the organization chart. No analogous arrangement exists on privately owned estates with a traditional factor. As such, the narratives in this chapter demonstrate that community ownership's signature move is to

tap community infrastructure into the duties of fact production previously assigned to the factor.

Situating local knowledge and local facts

"Local knowledge" is a familiar watchword in general conversations of community empowerment. In some instances, it simply refers to tapping into the existing expertise of people who live in a locality who many know something about a topic. However, exactly how that knowledge gets tapped, who benefits, who amplifies it, who validates it, and so forth is often unexplained, because those processes are subtle and in some cases occur silently between a limited set of partners. Further, "local knowledge" may, in some instances, gesture towards something that "everyone around here knows" or some such.

When I refer to "local facts," I am gesturing to that category of things that "everyone around here knows," and how that version of the thing gets settled on, propagated, and then acted upon. In this case, I am distinguishing *facts* as a specific form of knowledge, in that it has moved beyond a local person's expertise and become established as general knowledge. In the context of the rural estate, a "local fact" is not simply something "everyone knows," but also something that gets acted upon and deployed toward the achievement of some other end. This can be establishing the fact as an official government figure, as appears in Assynt during the counts of deer in the forest, or in implementing (or not implementing) a project which leaves an artifact or trace on the landscape. Further, local knowledge and facts are produced and translated into durable outcomes, both in material transformations to the constructed environment and in the production of facts visible to the state. Finally, both

facts and artifacts need ongoing maintenance and care, and only continue to exist in their operational forms via provision of the labor of maintenance and care.

Boundaries and binding in community infrastructure: who is included, who can speak

As this chapter aims to follow the production of local facts through the mediation and assembly of local knowledge, it will necessarily encounter an ongoing tension in rural Scotland of whom and what, exactly counts as "local." As I detail below, "local" in northwest Scotland is a composite of both immutable and fluid attributes, in which one's relative status as "local" itself is a kind of fact produced by community infrastructures and mediated by binding commons. I will first explore how locality gets produced and understood, then look at how achieving local acceptance can be far more than a merely rhetorical exercise. I will close this section with a critical look at the politics of expression and fact production in these spaces.

Gradations of being "local"

In the early 1990s, the board of the original Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust was criticized by the then-owner Schellenberg for consisting largely of "incomers," rather than "indigenous" Eigg natives. While public statements from the time show this to be largely untrue, Schellenberg had knowingly raised a key tension that has haunted community ownership, albeit at a low level, ever since. After over a century of declining population, in-migration has become a regular feature in northwest Scotland. Community owned estates have shown a consistent improvement over private estates in recruiting young workers with children,

however retirees from the urban UK are moving to both community and private estates in Scotland in large numbers. Unsurprisingly, this often results in an understood division in the population, between those who were born in the area and those who just arrived.

One director of the Assynt Crofters Trust described this dynamic, following a discussion about the graveyard around the ruined Stoer Church in which many, but certainly not all, native Assynt residents have ancestors.

Bacon: Do you feel ever excluded because you don't have ancestors in the graveyard?

Respondent: Um, no. But going along side that, there is, you know, there's always an undercurrent of incomer and native.

Bacon: And even being here 20 years, you're still an incomer?

Respondent: Oh yes. Always will be. Hopefully my children won't be.

A recurring theme on the trusts that I visited during my preliminary research was that the official trust leadership positions were often filled by those who, although they may have lived in the area for decades, did not originally hail from the local community. This phenomenon is widespread enough to be not only repeatedly commented on by concerned or frustrated trust leaders, wanting more buy-in from the 'locals,' as well as identified as a failing by skeptics, but has been well documented specifically in regard to community-led initiatives in rural Scotland (Creamer *et al.* 2019).

When viewed through the lens of the binding commons, who is "local" is mediated by different commons and access to them. At a crude level, the graveyard at old Stoer Church represents a very specific kind of binding commons, wherein having ones biological ancestors lying in the dirt below the ground mediates access to this peculiar kind of commons. This can then be understood as a particular kind of inclusion, albeit one to which no specific individual has the ability to change. Similarly, on Eigg, having been born on the

island (or in a hospital while ones parents were living on the island) gives one the status of being *Eiggagh*, another immutable category. However, as was repeatedly emphasized to me not just in Assynt and Eigg but everywhere I visited, "there's always an undercurrent" of that kind of ancestry but ultimately it is only one of many kinds of locality. As Creamer *et al.* noted, not all incomers are the same. The "white settlers" who move in but "don't get involved" in various community affairs are seen in a very different light than those who move in and interact more with the local customs.

Therefore, birth status operates as a specific binding commons, but one which is largely static and is mediated by other forms of community infrastructure. As the narratives in this chapter show, the binding commons that form around and are assembled by community trusts also mediate this kind of locality. However, as Creamer notes, the specific kinds of locality that, for example, serving as a director on the trust mediates depends on the other relations that the trust enters into, how it operates, and how it is broadly understood in the community. Again, seeing the trust as a specific and linking form of binding commons means that we can expect involvement in trusts as both mediated by community and for the ongoing formation of community to be mediated by with whom and with what the trust interacts.

Several stories from interview respondents show this kind of co-mediation of inclusion around trust involvement. A director on the Assynt Crofters Trust who had moved to Assynt described his first day in a board meeting. He had been asked to fill the position by the former director for his crofting township, who was moving away.

He asked me if I would do it. I said yes not knowing what was involved. I turned up, and the then chairman introduced me – we were sitting around a big table. He said,

“For those of you who don’t know him, who haven’t met him, this is [the new director]. He’s been living in [his township] for a number of years, and he’s the new director for [that township].

And an old man sitting directly opposite me looked at me, looked at the chairman and said, “Why can't we get local men?” That was my first introduction to the Crofter’s Trust. And the for the first year or two years I said very little. I thought about things, I listened, I became friendly with the then chair, Allan MacRae, who-who was one of the original, uh, group that formed the Assynt Crofters' Trust.

I became friendly with him. And gradually I realized that during a meeting somebody would say, “Uh, [the new director] can do that. Well, why-why doesn’t [he] do this?” And very gradually I got into it. I wasn’t accepted at the beginning. I was an outsider. I was accepted by some people, but not by all. And gradually, um, I- I think as in all organizations, institutions, you have to, you have to prove yourself. You have to show that you’re not wha-whatever they fear, the people who are already there.

And if you show that you’re reliable, that you can be depended on to be like them in certain instances, then they start trusting you with tasks. And that’s what it was with me.

As the quote shows, the new director had already been living in the area for a number of years, but had not obtained sufficient status to be seen as "local." However, because of his demonstrated reliability, and as other respondents emphasized, sitting quietly to begin with, he obtained increased trust, connection, and inclusion.

Obtaining inclusion, enacting exclusion

As community ownership taps the knowlege systems of community infrastructure, the decisions produced by the trust and the broader community, can be far more consequential than simply ones common designation as an "incomer" or a "local." This section follows a very long set of quotes from my interview with Charlie Galli, who runs the taxi service on Eigg (a critical service for tourists, because only residents are allowed to bring cars to the island). The prompt for this question came after Galli told me about feeling welcomed by the community when he and his wife first moved to the island's state-subsidized social housing units. I had asked him about why he felt welcomed, and he immediately mentioned

the community buyout as being a factor. This quote picks up there, as Galli intertwines his own story of inclusion and gaining acceptance with that of a couple that the island has "sussed out," ultimately leading to the trust denying planning approval for a construction project.

Bacon: You went right to it being about the buyout – what do you think the connection between sort of that welcomeness or that inclusion whatever you got, when you showed up, and the buyout is? Do you think that's – do you think they're related at all? And how would you – how would you put that into words?

Galli: It would be hard to say it wasn't related, because yeah, it's all part of the history of the island as well, I suppose – but yeah, coming here is uh – do you remember what I was saying about having a sense of humor? Well I think that's probably the main thing that saved me. I like to think I'm fairly popular on the island. I tell a few stories and bits and pieces and jokes and whatnot, and they – because I've got a good sense of humor, I think a lot of people seen that, and that's that kind of "Oh yeah, he's got good craic²²" and all that kind of thing. And you can translate craic in any way you like, but yeah, if you have the banter or the – then that's you, you're halfway in the door kind of thing, you know? And then the rest of it is just finding your feet on the island. If you come here with an attitude, then well, you're on the hiding to nothing really, you know?

There were people that did that before, and they left very sharply. They were trying to rip people off of land and so on. And eh – yeah – but like I said, it's a case of coming here and trying to fit in as well, because not everybody fits as well as these jigsaw puzzle-type things. There's some people have, you know, rough edges if you like, and they've got to suss you out -

[A longtime resident], when I first come here, he didn't really take to me at all, and then I'd had a series of uh, shall we say unfortunate events? . . . So, there's a whole lot of things and uh, come the time, [the resident] has just given me a hard time, and I'd had enough of it. And I let a lot of steam off at him and all this kind of thing, and I think the very fact that I did that, I gained [his] respect. Rather than just sitting back and taking it all the time, you know? So, yeah, a lot of things changed after that as well. So, personalities, I suppose.

There's a big thing when you come to a small community like this. If you are bolshie and all this kind of thing, then they're not going to take to you. But very – the island itself has uh – I've always said the island itself has a way of sorting people out. If

²² As Galli implies, "craic" (pronounced "crack") is a highly idiomatic Scots word borrowed from the Gaelic. It generally refers to time relaxing at a place such as a pub, a ceilidh, a jam session, or any gathering. "Craic" can mean both the experience of being there ("good craic down at the pub on Friday evenings") as well as someone's ability to contribute to that experience. ("Leaving already? Am I that bad craic?") In addition to the theoretical angles this extended quote provides, it should also highlight the reasons for Galli's reputation as a storyteller.

you come here and you're not of a good mind and a good heart, this island has a way of sussing you. And like those people, they came here to rip people off. To buy land very cheaply. Three grand for a building plot or something they were wanting to—.

Galli's winds through multiple forms of local fact production and local binding commons, as well as describing the process of community infrastructure operating and fulfilling information and work needs. First, "craic" operates here as a specific kind of participation in conversation and engagement with the community, a theme I will return to below in more detail. Notably, Galli identifies that craic does involve whether one is popular or well-liked, but also is part of "sussing out." He metaphorically ties this process to a jigsaw puzzle, what in ANT terminology would be assembly of the community actor-network. Notably, Galli is comparatively telling two stories simultaneously here, that of his own successful integration into the community and the island's success, in his view, of sussing out those with bad intentions. As Galli tells it, he had his own role to play in this.

I actually looked them up on the internet, and I found out that the woman—yeah, they were married—the woman was a director of a company that had all these uh, different places all over the – well certainly all over Europe. And when I looked up, eh, the place, they had bought a place in uh, Yorkshire, and what it was was a traditional farm building, a big stone farm building with a stone dike wall around this kind of field. So, they bought the building and all that very cheaply, and then they put another wall in the middle of the field and built another house on the other side. So basically creating two properties.

And this is the kind of thing they were doing. The poor old guy that sold them that place, he never made anything out of it, and could hardly afford to retire. So, once I showed these bits and pieces to the people on the island, they all started to uh, form an opinion, shall we say? And then the next thing they knew, uh, these people had chucked everything into their vehicle and the trailer and they never stopped to say goodbye or anything. They just went straight onto the boat, and never saw them again. So...

In a theme I will return to in the conclusion, Galli names the island of Eigg as an active participant in this narrative, as the one sorting out whether the newcomers have good intentions. However, as this passage shows, this is not mystical—part of "the island"

figuring this out is Galli's own use of an internet search engine. I asked him to expand on the specifics of how this happened.

Bacon: Now what – what do you think caused that? What - is it being sussed out and then – how did – what did that look like?

Galli: They came here, and the first thing they did was lie. They were going to – their first lie was that they were going to stay here and live here and be part of the community. And uh, very quickly, that was sussed out, and it wasn't going to be the case.

Bacon: They just didn't spend enough time here, was that – how did that...? How was that sussed out, I guess is I'm saying.

Galli: Uh, well I was a bit suspicious of them. . . She was into doing all kinds of yoga, keep fit stuff, all the rest of it. But all the time plugging away to get this piece of land there to build this so-called accommodation. Which turns out it was going to be a rented accommodation. So, they were going to make money off it, rather than actually live here.

The thing is, if you come here to live here, people will bend over backwards to help you out. When we come here, we never had gas for cooking. Somebody came along with one of these great big orange gas balls, and it was – and you can see but – said, "There you go. When you've got uh, the money and whatever else, you can replace it. You know, don't worry it." So, we got that figured in. [Another resident] came along and fixed our fire – it was a double door locker fire, didn't lock. So, a lot of the heat was drawing all the time and burning the coal away. He come over, very first day, took the door off, over there, sorted it all, put it back on, fire worked great. It was a whole lot of little bits and pieces. One of the farmers gave us a couple of sheep to stick in the freezer. All these little things, because you're coming there to be part of that community. And you don't have a hidden agenda and all this kind of stuff. So, in fact it was [the same resident that fixed the fire] that actually said to me about becoming the island's taxi. He used to do a minibus service on here. And said he wanted more time. I think it was just his way of saying here's a position, you know, do what you can with that kind of thing. He didn't have to do that. But it was a kind of a goodness of his heart thing. So, I greatly appreciated that.

Here as Galli continues the comparison between experiences, their clear intention of living on the island long-term, which as mentioned in previous chapters includes the difficult winters, nearly immediately tapped him into community infrastructure which provided heating and cooking fuel, critical repairs, and employment. On the last note, with the other resident effectively turning the taxi service job over to Galli, community steps

directly into a role which almost certainly would have been mediated by the estate factor under private ownership. As Galli and his spouse had been homeless before arriving on the island, these represent critical, timely services for them as new residents. In comparison,

Galli then returns to discussing the other couple he is comparing his experience to:

But these people were just trying to make a name for their selves. And you could tell that they were just there to, you know, get this piece of land as cheaply as they could. And I think their final mistake was the fact that [another crofter] next door, who has eh, cattle and sheep and so on, one of these cows was heavily pregnant, so much so that it can hardly walk. So, it used to go a few steps and it would just lie down for a bit and all that. These people were taking pictures of this cow, and they started this Crowdfunding thing. "Save the Cow." And started - without [the owner]'s knowledge or anything else - went ahead. And if you're going to do things like - you're going to get a bit of a backlash, you know?

And the fact that they publicized [the] cow. That was the thing that really blew his fuse, you know. No right, *I mean, if you're going to do that, you should just go around to the shop and say, "what's the situation with this cow," you know?* If you're that concerned. Rather than just blast out there, you know. So uh, yeah, he uh, he was quite het up about that one. As I say, I think that was the straw that broke the camel's back.

In a dissertation focusing on a more-than-human composition of community, I cannot help but note the pregnant cow and the internet crowdfunding campaign as mediators of community inclusion. Beyond that, though, in the emphasized text, Galli points back to the ubiquity of the shop and the pier as the central, irreplaceable hub of information on the island. In what became, in this narrative, a moment of peak controversy, the transgression was not just appropriating a neighboring crofter's cow for an internet crowdfunding campaign. It was also a *failure to consult community infrastructure, at the site of the binding commons, the shop at the pier.*

I further asked Galli to fill out the details as to what happened. As Galli explained, the couple had provisionally purchased a plot of land and were seeking planning permission to put in an additional dwelling (a common practice on Eigg crofts) on it. At this point, the

story incorporates both the official roles of both the Isle of Eigg Residents Association and by extension, the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust in which the IERA has a controlling interest and for which Maggie Fyffe serves as secretary.

Galli: They have provisionally got the land. The deal hadn't gone through properly, because there was still the planning – never really . . . got their planning permission and all that kind of thing. . . There were several meetings, right, that they should have turned up to. In the planning process. Which they didn't even bother. And then Maggie said, right, enough is enough. This is getting silly. We're going to announce a meeting; you're going to be invited; and whatever uh – because people had questions. Wanted to know what the purpose of the building was; were they in actual fact going to live here; because people, after I'd shown the wee bits and pieces I found, everybody else started digging in and finding that oh no, they don't actually live there. They live somewhere else. So, it wasn't the story that they laid out in the first place.

And then the whole purpose of the building had changed completely as well. So then the whole island was getting a - very kind of suspicious of this two people that turned up out of the blue with this notion of building something over there. And when they wanted their questions answered, they had no intention of showing up. They knew that the answers they would give, if they were telling the truth, would not be the answers that the local people wanted to hear.

So, they refused to come to the meetings. Then Maggie said oh, well, "on your head be it" kind of thing. So, there was no planning permission granted. When that happened, it set something else in motion, and then the next thing you knew, the people had taken off and it was never heard of again.

That was it. Straight on to the ferry. Didn't stop to say goodbye to anybody. They were gone, and that was that. They'd pretty much been sussed out and uh – and well, if they had come to the meetings and then talked through, there might have been some kind of negotiation or whatever else. But to just go off and yeah, not even talk to anybody or discuss it or anything. As I say, there should be a process and yeah. I think that being the kind of people they were, I think it's probably the best result for everybody. . . . I knew they were ripping [the people they had purchased the land from] off. So, I was concerned at that, and that's the only reason I went to the meetings. *So, yes, as I said, the island has a way of working things out.*

I again must emphasize that I cannot verify specific details in this case beyond Galli's narrative. Even so, the action of community infrastructure repeatedly appears in multiple forms throughout this narrative. In narrower actions, Galli and his spouse's interactions at the local shop and their demonstration of willingness to live on the island permanently

trigger the supply of fuel, essential maintenance, and employment. This is not necessarily smooth and conflict-free, as a heated exchange between Galli and a well-established resident was, in Galli's narrative, necessary for him to gain respect. Further, in the "sussing out" two major sites of community calculation have appeared in the production of this fact. Aside from Galli's own internet searches and the neighbor's anger at having his cow falsely shared as being sick, the couple first fails to consult "the shop." When the informal fact production at the shop reaches a higher level of conflict, the IERA steps in wielding its incumbent planning power derived from the IEHT. Formal meetings are held which the couple again fail to attend, leading to the denial of planning approval for their new "accommodation."

With this, the major binding commons on the island activate as sites of calculation. Suspicions grow at the "the shop," equally mediated by internet searches and a pregnant cow. The couple are unable or unwilling to produce sufficient evidence to counter these suspicions at the IERA's all-resident meetings where they are given a formal venue for doing so. As a result, the new structure they had intended to produce as their durable bond to the island is interrupted and fails, and they leave the island. In Galli's terms, "the island" has spoken.

Whose speech is translated into facts in community infrastructure?

Local fact production, then, represents a form of translation of speech acts into actionable knowledge. Community ownership further translating those speech acts into facts made durable by their materiality and their inscription in state and legal representations. With the production of these speech acts, then, I must return to MacPhail's deployment of Spivak to interpret the Assynt Crofters Trust as the voices of crofters

emerging from subalternity to register their speech acts in consequential ways. By this, because ownership allows for the speech act to be "heard" at the state, legal, and broader political level, the speech act is finally completed, and the crofters themselves emerge from subalternity. In Callon's (1984) terms, because community ownership has allowed a community body to achieve *interessement* in a position between the land, state actors, and the local population, it is now an "obligatory passage point," giving it the authority to establish and act on local facts.

However, if the power of community ownership derives from its ability to connect local fact production with information gathering and planning, what politics intercede to limit whose speech acts are completed in the translation of local knowledge? This is the point at which understanding community infrastructure around *commons* specifically becomes particularly useful. Commons, as Ostrom and others emphasize, cannot operate without some degree of partial exclusion. Local rules, customs, and arrangements mediate and differentially restrict access to the commons ("appropriation" in Ostrom's terms). In community infrastructure, these arrangements are informal, relying on sets of specific interactions of the kind which appear in the narratives throughout this chapter. With these differential exclusions in mind, a natural question should arise of specific groups or types of actors being included.

Galli's heated interaction with a longtime local resident shows one particular way in which, despite a hostile confrontation, Galli was able to gain acceptance. However, how such an interaction is experienced will, of course, be mediated by structures such as gender. A female Assynt resident who has served on both the ACT and AF boards recounted her experience of some directors.

Bacon: Tell me a little bit about your relationship with other trust leaders or board members. . .

Respondent: In the Assynt Crofters' Trust? Yeah. I get on fine with all of them. Um, you have to learn how to do it. And it's not easy to start with. Or maybe it's not easy when you're younger. But as you get older, a tiny bit wiser, um, you kind of learn how to do it. And you have to, you have to be quite brave up here. You have to stand no nonsense and give as good as you get in a way, in a polite way. You know, if someone's – the other day we were discussing things and one of them was going, right at the beginning with his pen, and like this in my face with his pen. And this is what you – and he wasn't being angry. He was just making his point of view like this. It was really quite uncomfortable for me, you know, someone with a pen like that. And I would say, do you mind not pointing that pen right in my face, please?

So he put the pen down and he went – and you have to be quite quick and quite firm and just say – and once you've done it once or twice and you've actually notice, then you get more confident and say, oh, maybe I can stand up for myself with these grumpy old men. So you have to learn how to do it. Because they can be quite intimidating.

On the one hand, the respondent here, like Galli above, stands up for herself and thereby gains a measure of respect from the aggressive man. At the same time, however, she notes that she's uncomfortable the entire time, and perhaps she only feels comfortable to be "quite brave" enough to "give as good as you get" because she's now "older, a tiny bit wiser."

Gender can also here intersect with the status of local vs. incomer, as the same respondent shares.

Bacon: Does that undercurrent of incomer and native play any role when it comes to managing the land of the trust? Is there any place where that friction starts to – or is just simply an identity that sort of gets labeled on you and you move around with?

Respondent: Um, we could talk about this subject for about three weeks if you've got the time. But I try not to even entertain the idea. You know, I live here. I consider myself a local. Because I live here, pure and simple. . . I have learned that, you know, when you're in these meetings and things, you just let everybody else talk and don't say anything unless, you know, you choose your battles, as it were. Or eventually somebody will see your point of view so you can just support them. And then it's coming from somebody else.

So I never charge in with my opinion on anything.

Bacon: I'll phrase this question as best I can. What is – so you've brought that up in response to my question about being, you know, an incomer. Are there any other reasons why you feel that you need to withhold you opinion. Does anybody, will anybody be dismissive of what you have to say for another reason?

Respondent: Yeah. And there's some guys there who are bullies. So you usually just let them get off their chests what they need to get off their chests and have a rant and a rave about something.

Bacon: Guys?

Respondent: Yeah. I'm sorry, just is a fact. . . . So there are some people that you can't have reasonable discussion with on certain subjects.

This particular respondent, by her own account and by others in Assynt, has achieved considerable respect in the community and has been successful in her positions as a director. However, in this account she still has moment where she "let[s] everybody else talk and [doesn't] say anything," and "never charge[s] in with [her] opinion on anything." Further, there are bullies, specifically "guys" with whom no reasonable discussion is possible.

Similar dynamics were reported by a male former director of the Assynt Foundation, whose wife had also served as a director:

Bacon: Would you – did that, tell me about your relationship with the other leaders in the trust.

Respondent: Um – [groans dramatically, then laughs]

Bacon: Did being on the board of the foundation change any of those relationships at all?

Respondent: [hesitates, laughs] For me, no. I, I never felt as though . . . it changed my relationships with them. I think [my wife] would certainly indicate that, uh, at times the board had perhaps male orientated domination that a female might find difficult to handle. I'm trying to pick my words carefully. [laughs]

Bacon: So there was maybe some people on the board at that time that had the tendency to dominate the conversation. Would that be fair to say? And those people happened to be male?

Respondent:[whispers, smiling, nods] That would be fair to say.

The greater argument I make in this dissertation is that community ownership's successes are due to its ability to assemble local knowledges into local facts and thereby surpass private ownership. However, these accounts show in the critical spaces of calculation, women's voices may be suppressed at a level higher than men's voices. Community facts, then will be produced from a specific, disproportionately male situation.

As Haraway would argue, to then designate these community facts as somehow being free from social politics would be yet another permutation of the "God trick" she criticizes.

Importantly, however, while community infrastructure may still, unsurprisingly, include barriers to women's speech acts, community ownership is unusually female-led for organizations in the UK. In their books, both Alistair MacIntosh and Camile Dressler make a cheeky reference the Gaelic name that sailors use for Eigg, *Eilean nam Ban Mora*, or literally, "Island of the Big Women," to note the central leadership roles played by women in the buyout, most notably Maggie Fyffe but also several others, including Hilda Ibrahim and Dressler herself. A chair of one trust who has also held leadership positions with

Community Land Scotland noted this:

Respondent: I think, you know, and one of the most pleasant things these days is that when I go to community bodies I find that at least 40 to 50 percent of the attendees are female. That the boards have got a lot of ladies on them, that, you know, we're actually working as a whole community, not half of the community. . . . I work in an organization now where of the employees there is none are male. We've got three employees, they're all female, the chairman is male, fine that's me. . . . So I'm in a minority at work and I'm really quite happy with it. . . . But I think the community bodies are much more gender balanced than the majority of organizations.

Michael: And if could just ask you to speculate why you think that is, community bodies more gender balanced than other organizations?

Respondent: I think because generally speaking community bodies are much more interested in the population as a whole rather than just in their own tiny little bit of interest. Men generally are pretty tightly focused I think. Women generally take a wider view of things. . . .

It's a way of looking at things I think that says we want to make it tick, and so let's do it. Let's make it tick, and we have a problem in British society, have had a problem in British society, and we still do have I think is that most people have, what's the word? It's top down. We have community empowerment imposed from the top down. And if we have a consultation we are told the consultation is on this, and these are the six possibilities.

Not the consultation is on this, what do you think are the possibilities? These are the six you can comment on, you know, and it's a style that we have in our society I think. . . . It's been an issue throughout the planning bits, and it's constantly there. You know, people are planned on rather than planned for. It's pushed down to

people, and I think there is a push back against that now, and community bodies are the right way to push back against it.

Bacon: And that brings in the possibility more for women to be involved . . .

Respondent: Yeah, I think so.

These themes of whose speech is translated into community facts will continue to emerge throughout these narratives. In the subsequent part of this chapter, I will focus on the two areas with the oldest community trusts as I continue to follow these longer narratives of fact production.

The buyout movement approaches 30: Eigg and Assynt

For this dissertation work, I specifically selected Eigg and Assynt as focal areas for this research simply because between the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and the Assynt Crofters Trust, they were the first community buyouts. In addition to the outsized role each played in launching the community buyout movement, thereby making them sources of insights into the movements origin, as the first trusts they are also, tautologically, the oldest. With the longest track records, they offer unique views into how community buyouts evolve and change, and offer unique glimpses into how the transformative impact of community ownership accumulates over time.

Assynt

The Assynt Crofters Trust was the first community buyout to "cross the finish line" and achieve community ownership. However, unlike on Eigg or other estates where the buyout purchased a wider swath of land, the ACT only purchased the crofting areas of Assynt. Since the ACT buyout, several other major pieces of land have gone into community

ownership, including the Assynt Foundation but also the Culag Community Woodland Trust, which owns both the Culag Woodland and another non-contiguous parcel of land known as the Little Assynt Estate, as well as the Assynt Community Development Trust which owns a few buildings in Lochinver. Because of time constraints, I focused solely on the ACT and the AF.

Assynt Overview Map with Major Estate Boundaries



- Quinag (John Muir Trust)
- Assynt Estates (Vestey Family)
- Little Assynt (Culag Community Woodland Trust)
- Ardvar (Privately owned)
- North Assynt (Assynt Crofters Trust)
- Canisp and Drumrunie (Assynt Foundation)

Estate boundaries derived from those published at <http://whooownsscotland.org.uk/>

2
 Miles

Producing local facts: Examples from the Assynt deer management group

Two stories by Ray MacKay, a director on the Assynt Crofters Trust, show the ways in which "local knowledge" as a category gets parlayed into durable facts. In the first, local knowledge appears in the most conventionally understood sense—as that held by particular persons who are recognized as reliable to speak on some aspect of local affairs. The following story takes place at a meeting of the local deer management group where the estate owner is looking to get community support for the re-introduction of wolves:

[The owner of another estate is] one of the-the leading proponents of re-wilding. And he wishes to introduce wolves. And several people said they thought this was a very bad idea and that there would inevitably be escapes.

And he said, "No. We will build it. We will build fences high enough to contain the wolves." And there was this old guy sitting at the back. He's obviously not a land owner. He was a ghillie²³, you know. Um, sitting there, all hunched up in his tweeds. And he only said one word in the whole meeting. He looked up and he said, "Snow drift." That was it. And everyone went, "What?" He didn't even repeat himself. Somebody said, "Uh, he said snow drift." And then everyone went, "You're right. You know?" Because drifting snow, it doesn't matter how high your fence is, you can just walk over the top of it.

And, uh, that was great. That was, that was to me an example of how a little bit of local knowledge and common sense could undermine what seems a really, uh, you know, really well thought out, carefully planned, rational policy.

The dynamics here are relatively simple, but at the risk of belaboring the obvious we can break down this story along ANT terms to see how local knowledge interjects and changes the trajectory of a local project. The estate owner has a "well thought out, carefully planned, rational policy" to surround the wolf reintroduction area with a large fence. This is presented at a community meeting which, while not decisive, will shape whether the estate owner gets planning approval for this initiative.

²³ A ghillie is a local deer stalking guide who shows a visiting shooter around and helps them locate deer to shoot.

As MacKay tells the story, he mentions that the speaker is older, male, not a land owner, and a ghillie, and therefore earned his living spending large amounts of time walking or driving around unpopulated parts of estates for hunting. He is then able to, with two words, interrupt the progression of the re-wilding project by introducing a concern (the likelihood that snow would allow wolves to escape any fence) with only two words. Again to belabor the obvious, the old ghillie is not himself taking action to cause the project to be non-viable—the snow is the one doing that. In Callon's terms, the ghillie has *translated* the action between the snow, the proposed fence, and the wolves into a new venue. It is in this venue that the ghillie's words intercept an estate owner's speech act ("wolves will be reintroduced to the estate") on its way to becoming fact. The project is thereby diverted, and the wolves are never introduced onto the estate.

A much more complicated example shows the complex, political processes by which local knowledge production alters a set of state-established facts, facilitated here by community infrastructure. This also alters, in turn, a set of land and deer management planning decisions. Again, as told by MacKay regarding his role representing the Assynt Crofters Trust in deer management conversations, this story involves a dispute with Scottish Natural Heritage²⁴ (SNH). As the state actor tasked with wildlife management, SNH was advocating for an increased cull of deer levels in the area in order to reduce grazing on the Ardvar woodlands. Two closely connected binding commons are in operation here—the woodland which spans three estates and the deer herd. What emerges is a process by which state-curated facts, in this case by SNH, are re-opened by community processes and re-

²⁴ SNH was renamed to "NatureScot" in 2020 but for simplicity this dissertation will continue to refer to it as SNH, as all data were collected before this name change.

articulated. In a critical piece of communication, MacKay drafted a letter on behalf of ACT to SNH's board. The text of the letter makes explicit how ACT were attempting to re-open a set of scientific facts which, in the eyes of SNH's staff, had become closed, resulting in a decision to enforce a much larger deer cull in Assynt:

The first thing that I wish to say is that I cannot blame you for coming to that decision - given the information provided to you by your officials I might well have done the same. And it was obvious in the discussions with some of you after the meeting that you felt there was a part of the story that you had not been told – you felt you needed more context. But, at the same time, the ‘Assynt’ issue had been dragging on for so many years that you felt that something had to be done. (MacKay 2017)

All quotes below are from my interview with MacKay except where otherwise noted.

The first issue, as MacKay explains, involves the official designation of the specific type of woodland, of which the ACT has standing to address because of its ownership of part of the woodland, along with the Ardvar estate and the John Muir Trust, an environmental NGO.

We had the two problems with SNH's position on the refusal to change position [on deer cull levels]. The first problem related to the nature of the woodland and the condition in which they were. SNH's advisors were saying that the woodlands were in unfavorable, declining conditions. And to us the woodlands – we are a third owner of the woodland. They are divided – we – it's not a third in terms of area, but there are three owners of the woodland. The woodland was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest – SSSI, as a birch woodland. It was then redesignated under a European Union designation, a Natura designation. And it was designated as a Western acidic oak woodland. Very rare, one of the most northerly examples [designated along with a nearby but discontinuous woodland].

In the Ardvar woodland there are no stands of oak, there is no oak growing throughout the woodland and there is not the 30 percent, which I think is the minimum foliage cover of oak which would designate it as an oak woodland. It doesn't meet the criteria, we believe, for an oak woodland. So we were unhappy with that. The reason being that if it is designated as a special area of conservation, there is much less tolerance for herbivore impact because the argument runs – deer will do much more damage to the understory of an oak woodland than they will to a birch woodland. . . . And that is what we were being caught on. They were saying that it was unfavorable declining because they were looking at it from the perspective of an oak woodland. We objected to that.

To be explicit, what is being contested is the official SSSI designation for the woodland as an oak forest, a state fact maintained by SNH. The fact as maintained by SNH *should* represent the species content of the woodland. However, MacKay and ACT (along with the Ardvar estate and the John Muir Trust) interject, based on local knowledge of the forest, and demand SNH re-open an official fact for consideration. Notably, it is the ACT's status as landowner which gives it official standing to object to the deer cull. As such, something which should be as empirically evident as tree species composition within a relatively small woodland is subject to a political interjection in which the status of ownership grants ACT an audience in this factual controversy. MacKay's letter to SNH on behalf of ACT highlights the degree to which the *established scientific fact* of what is an SSSI is very much the result of speech acts from particular parties:

In the Ardvar Woodland area, there is an SSSI – an upland birch wood which has seen considerable regeneration – and an SAC – an upland oak wood which is in 'unfavourable condition' according to SNH officials. It is not at all clear, however, that there actually is an oak wood at Ardvar. There is a birch wood with a small handful of oak trees but nothing that would fit any of the available definitions of an upland oak wood. SNH's own habitat survey, published only this month, identifies a grand total of 3 oak seedlings out of 8800 sampled, a tiny fraction of one percent. This is what you might see in a birch wood, not an oak wood. Coincidentally, the writers of the Biodiversity Action Plan state that upland birch woods can be very easily mistaken for upland oak woods – the only difference being that there are 'few or no oak', When SNH's Senior Woodland Advisor was challenged on the SAC designation at Ardvar, he said –

'It has pretty much what you'd expect from an upland oak wood except for the oak. Like chicken-flavoured crisps, you don't need to have any chicken.'

In other words, it seems to be an oak wood simply because your officials say it's an oak wood. (MacKay 2017)

Returning to the transcript of our interview, MacKay goes on to discuss how ACT also contested SNH's official tallies of deer, through a re-interpretation of SNH's own aerial counts.

And the second thing we objected to was the deer population models, which they insisted that we follow. There are standard models. We didn't have any problem with that, but the standard models have – at some stage could be based on an accurate count. And we have had – there have been more government paid for helicopter counts of the Assynt Peninsula than any other part of Scotland. By quite a big factor. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent on helicopter flights. They normally count deer after the New Year and before spring, sometime around March is good, particularly if there's snow on the ground and it's a nice, blue sky because you have a very clear field of vision, you can see the animals, you can push them into places. They take photographs of them with the helicopters, and it's all done very well. . . . and the numbers were fairly consistent and fairly high.

However, the experience of the people on the ground when they were trying to kill these many animals in July, August and September for the stags was that there weren't that many stags on the ground throughout the estate. There weren't anything like the numbers there should've been. For some reason – we objected at the time, but in retrospect we're very glad it happened. For some reason SNH conducted a helicopter count in November. And this was amazing because whereas the previous year the count was something like 16-1700 animals throughout the estate . . .

So the number was reduced by 50 percent. Just over 800 animals counted in November. Now, this didn't ring any bells with us. We just assumed this was how it was. But a guy who came from SNH to look at the Ardvar woodland very gradually began to realize that something odd was going on. And he said that the problem is that the animals are not here in the summer, they are not here in November. As soon as the bad weather comes, they start flooding in from the high ground on the other side of the road, which goes up to Kylesku in the north.

. . . And they come from there to the shelter and comparatively good ground, low ground of the Assynt, North Assynt Estate and other parts of the Assynt Peninsula. They come around the side of Quinag [a mountain], they come up from the side of Loch Assynt, and they just flood into this area. . . . [The other side of the road and loch] is a different deer management group. . . . It's crazy because there's a lot of deer that move between the two. That's what we're slowly realizing, that there's a lot more – the-the-the political structure, as it were, of the deer management groups are simply convenient. And no one has yet taught the deer to adhere to there, you know, boundaries unfortunately.

Assynt Peninsula Deer Management Group Area



National Forest Inventory

- Woodland
- Estate boundaries

Forestry data from UK National Forest Inventory

Again, what is under contest in this instance is not a management philosophy, but the simple arithmetic number of animals on the estate. However, as MacKay explains, collecting that number not only requires an expensive helicopter flight, but is typically done during a time of year when the snow on the ground and the lack of foliage makes seeing the deer easy. Importantly, though, the relevant number for the agreed deer cull is the number of animals in the summertime, rather than the March number. What the three landowners, including ACT, and SNH collectively discover is that these are not the same number, because deer cross the boundary of the deer management areas between the winter count and the summer stalking period. Notably, unlike in the first story about the old ghillie and the snow, this isn't an interjection of unalloyed local wisdom overriding the state actor. Rather, because of the ACT and other stalkers re-opening the question, a new count is conducted (over ACT's objections) and a new understanding eventually emerges via the surprising result of the November count.

To return to MacKay's letter to SNH:

Obviously, if you count in late winter you get a much higher number than if you count in November. Why? *Again it's obvious to anyone who lives here.* When the weather is hard, many animals move west from the high ground of Glas Bheinn across the A894 and round the slopes of Quinag to the more sheltered and low-lying Ardvar Woodland area. Generations of crofters and shepherds will attest to the fact that sheep from Stronchrubie & Inchnadamph were frequently to be found in the area of Ardvar given certain weather conditions. *This is local knowledge.* (MacKay 2017, emphasis added)

In Scott's terms, the collective work of the ACT and the deer management group, along with the helicopter flights, translate *metis* ("obvious" "local knowledge") into *techne* (state-recognized fact). The impression, "there weren't that many stags on the ground throughout the estate" is spoken into the decision making process, which, combined with the mismatch between the November and March counts, allows for a re-interpretation of the deer count.

MacKay's account does not end here, though. The John Muir Trust, as a national environmental organization which holds and manages land in a particular way, is regarded with a great deal of mistrust by many in Assynt, including many crofters. When I asked MacKay about how he became involved, here was his explanation:

I was asked to chair the deer management group for the Assynt Peninsula. And we were having a success. And that group had been dysfunctional basically because of the arrival of the John Muir Trust. And the previous people who were running the Assynt Peninsula Deer Management Group really couldn't deal with the John Muir Trust.

They didn't like them. They didn't want anything to do with them, and they didn't accept that they had a valid role to play. My attitude was quite different. I-I went out and met the land manager . . . I went out on the hill with him, I liked him. I think I can now call him a friend. We were quite close. My neighbor works for the John Muir Trust. I'm close with her, as well.

So I formed bridges with the John Muir Trust. So eventually what happened within our group is that we all cohered against SNH because we felt that SNH was being quite unreasonable as a group. Even though some of the John Muir Trust principles were being protected by SNH, they still thought that being in the group was better than being out on their own, being friendly with SNH but separate from everyone else in the group, if you understand.

As a retired academic who has become a crofter and a director of the Assynt Crofter's Trust, MacKay notes his role in translating the interests of the ACT and the local deer management group into newspaper letters and columns and responses to government documents.

I don't have a history in crofting. I don't profess to know anything like—I don't have the kind of deep knowledge that some of the crofters have who serve on the trust. They have a lifetime of working the sheep, cattle, all of that. That's not something that I do, but what I am good at from my professional life helps my crofting world now is language. So I have, over the last year, been the, been the voice of the Assynt Crofters Trust in—vocally and in writing. . . . So most of my time is taken up with formulating arguments, writing them, trying to find effective rhetoric, basically, to counter SNH's. And that has proved quite successful.

Finally, I repeat my earlier assertion that community infrastructure does not simply transform the fact production process, but the work of fact production around the binding

commons of the deer produces new connections within the community. Once more, MacKay recalls establishing relationships with SNH staff in order to facilitate resolving these decisions.

Bacon: Did your personal connection, personal relationship change within as a result of working on that?

MacKay: Yeah, i-it got a lot stronger. Well, I have very strong relations with SNH. Lots of them came here. Over the year and a half of all the struggle and strife, they were here almost every month. The problem was they kept sending different people. But they always came and had cups of tea and biscuits and all the rest of it. So, yeah. I try to be open, friendly, hospitable to people. I think that's the best way to go about things.

The Assynt Foundation's wood chip boiler

At the center of the main cluster of developed structures on the Assynt Foundation's 44,000 acres, Glencanisp Lodge is a Victorian hunting lodge that has been converted to a bed and breakfast. The lodge sits in a small wooded glen next to a small freshwater loch, at the end of a mile and a half one-lane track that begins near the center of the village of Lochinver. A small cluster of buildings loosely surrounds the lodge, with a nearby series of outbuildings holding the Foundation's offices and a pottery studio. Past the lodge after the paved road makes a terminal loop sits a pair of buildings with shaggy "green roofs" on them and prominent supports made from stripped logs from the estate. The nearest of these to the lodge is an open-sided pole barn, whereas the one further out encloses an art studio suitable for classes or small groups. Just behind the lodge sits a low metal building with a tall silver chimney, which perhaps most embodies the hopes and frustrations which have surrounded the Assynt Foundation since its beginnings.



Unused wood chip boiler behind the Glencanisp Lodge in June of 2016.



The exact history of what happened with the wood boiler and the pole barn varied somewhat between respondents. What is beyond dispute is that the boiler was intended to be the primary source of heat and hot water for the lodge using chipped wood harvested from the excess timber that grows immediately around the lodge. Further, it is not in use and may never be in the future. Instead, the oil boiler which was intended as a back-up facility has been the primary source of heat for the lodge.

The wood chip boiler here is not just a project which failed to assemble and draw in sufficient information, operational labor, and enterprise to sustain it. Additionally, curiously, the stories around exactly what happened with the boiler and why it failed, as told by people who are likely to be in a position to know, are not at all consistent. On a few points, they are mutually contradictory.

Gordon Robertson, the general manager of the Assynt Foundation at the time of my field work in 2018, explained the story as follows:

Robertson: Can I be very truthful? It was put in by very well meaning people who didn't apply for the renewable heat incentives so it's never been used.

Bacon: Oh, it's never even been turned on?

Robertson: It's cheaper to run on oil because it was done, it was put in in a well meaning but amateur way, without seeking advice. And again, I've moved from that. We're trying to find a way. But it has been a missed opportunity. The other thing in putting a woodchip boiler, I mean we're on the East Coast – I'm sorry, the West Coast here. Most of the wood comes from the East Coast. I think when you put a boiler in, you've got to think, what about the wood? I mean we do have some wind blown wood that's finite, that has – here, but ultimately we would have to import wood chip from the East Coast, which is an expensive and not a very green thing to do.

A former board member who has close business relationships with the Foundation said this when asked about his experience with the rest of the Trust:

Respondent: Varied; at the time very varied. For the most part positive, but having said that most of the problems before, during and since I was on the board have been created by other board members.

Bacon: What would you say those problems are?

Respondent: Um . . . People running off on their own agenda without consulting others. People making autocratic decisions without consulting others. Bad decision making that was taken by what I used to refer to as a kitchen cabinet; you know like half a dozen people would get on too well together, you know the coordinator, the treasurer and somebody else, constantly presenting the board with *fait accompli*, you know? That's not good.

When I asked about those "bad decisions," he used the wood chip boiler as an illustration:

Respondent: During the redevelopment and refurbishment of the lodge a decision was made to install a woodchip boiler.

Interviewer: And why was that decision made?

Respondent: Well, the idea was we'd build like this big barn, which would be multipurpose, but one of its main purposes would be to house and manage woodchips and manufacture, but this was never looked into properly but it was funded. So we then spent £45,000 on the boiler and a further £30,000 to £40,000 building a building for it and linking it to the house and doing all these bits and pieces.

By the time it was finished it was cheaper to buy oil than it was to buy woodchips because we couldn't make our own woodchips because we hadn't built the pool barn at the time. We also had somebody come and tell us that our timber was the wrong kind of wood - you know unless we had hundreds and thousands to spend on a wood chipper we wouldn't be making woodchips. . . .

Well, nobody researched it properly but it was driven by one person on the board who had a personal interest in housing machinery up here and running that side of the proposed business, but hadn't researched it himself. That's an example of how somebody influential, local on the board can skew a decision, because to this day the boiler sitting there - it doesn't work, it's never been installed correctly - and we ran on the auxiliary oil-fired boiler.

By contrast, in talking with Marianne Simpson, at the end of the interview I discovered that she and her partner had a personal history with the wood boiler as well²⁵. In attempting to prompt a conversation about the Foundation, I mentioned the boiler.

Bacon: I've been told about the . . . wood-chip heater—essentially they thought we're going to heat the lodge with the wood chips. . .because we've got wood, but nobody thought that they had to chip the wood?

Marianne: But we did that. That was our job.

Michael: Your job was chipping the wood?

Marianne: Yep. We had the forestry company eight years ago – seven, eight years ago – and the foundation were looking for somebody to come in and retrieve all the wind-blow, chip it, use it as biomass for their boilers – win/win. They've got the wood. There's the chipper. We'll do it. So we were there for – how long – nearly a year, working up there, clearing all the dead, fallen trees, chipping all the wood, filling out the hoppers.

Michael: So you had a wood chipper you could haul up there?

Marianne: Yeah, yeah. We had all that.

²⁵ I am not in a position to validate facts on this point but in order to avoid improper implications, there are reasons in the rest of the interviews to be relatively certain that Simpson is not the self-interested party mentioned in the above narrative.

Clive: We had one permanently parked up there.

Marianne: And we just – all the trees we cut we put into the chipper. Kept it completely boiling all the time. But again, the manager at the time wasn't as upfront and honest as he could've been.

Clive: That was with both us and with the committee.

Marianne: Yeah, he just – he was, again, one of these self-serving people who was doing it for his own benefits. And we ended up walking away from it with an unpaid bill for £12,000, which put us under.

Michael: You had to sell the chipper?

Marianne: Mm-hmm, and the chainsaws, and the equipment, and the bands – the whole lot. We lost a lot because of the Foundation, because they couldn't – again, there was two committees. One was the business side of things, and one was the actual running of the things, and there was no communication between them.

Clive: But there should've been, because the manager goes between them. He was the blockage.

So the wood chip boiler sits in as a failed project, not just because it couldn't assemble the necessary labor, expertise, chipped wood, equipment, and funding around it, but the narratives around it do not even resolve to a coherent story! While I have every reason to believe that the respondents telling me about the boiler were constructing their coherent narratives around the established facts that they knew, some fundamental questions clearly do not resolve into more general facts. Was the wood chip boiler ever fired and boiling or had it never been turned on? Was the problem the former manager at the time who failed to act as a reliable go-between, the board member who wanted the forestry business for his own purposes, or the failure to apply for renewable energy funds? Or was the wood the wrong kind, and even if the above failures had been averted, would the boiler still have failed?

These questions are impossible for an American researcher doing a limited number of interviews to resolve. My best guess from what I was able to learn is that the boiler did in fact run for a year as Simpson explained, but this part of the narrative was forgotten over

time because the original dream for the boiler never materialized. More importantly, the boiler's failure is so profound that it has found no reliable translator to place the story of its failure into reliable lore of local facts. If the boiler did in fact run for a year, then no less a source as the general manager of the Foundation remains unaware of this fact. Community infrastructure surrounding the Foundation was insufficient to successfully plan and execute the problem, and it continues to be insufficient to resolve the experience into a settled narrative.

The Assynt Foundation in community?

These sorts of frustrations and confounded intentions were not limited to the wood chip boiler. While recruiting an Assynt resident and former Assynt Foundation board member for an interview for this study at the Caberfeidh pub in Lochinver, I mentioned that I was doing a dissertation on community land ownership, to which she quickly quipped in typically dry Scottish fashion, "why in God's name would you want to do a thing like that?" When I asked her later about why she'd responded that way, it led to a longer discussion about her frustrations with being a director and the constrained possibilities:

It's way out over there, so it's kind of like this – it's not – even though it's there, in the village you're living, you're just kind of living on the fringes of it. So it doesn't really have – you're not part of the foundation. . . . It's like when you're a director of the Assynt Foundation or when you're a director of any of them, you become tied. You become so locked into this-this mindset that you lose—you lose all objectivity. And the longer you're a director the more objectivity you lose because you become so engrossed in the day-to-day, in the e-mails and the-the-the back and forths. . . . It's almost like you have no room to maneuver. You're—at least from my own experience. It was like people put things onto the table. And instead of saying, "Uh, we want this. We don't want this," they're like, "Well, you can have this and we can do this, but we can't do what the community wants." So what the community wanted was they-they wanted housing. They were told that's not possible.

One notable distinction of the Assynt Foundation is that unlike most other trusts, no residents live permanently on the Foundation's 44,000 acres. Formerly a deer shooting estate, most of the built structures on the estate are in the small area around the Glencanisp lodge. With the influx of retirees into Assynt and the conversion of houses to vacation rentals, housing for residents wanting to stay in the district has become increasingly scarce. While the total acreage of land available on the Foundation made it a seemingly natural place to allocate some for housing, very little of the land remains accessible by road and has access to the electrical grid. Foundation land that is near the road, particularly that near the short drive between Glencanisp and Lochinver, is very boggy. The Foundation has gone through several iterations of attempting to site housing, including new crofts, on its land. However, all have run out of steam at some point. The above respondent explained that while she was on the board, the constraints of the Foundation's limited finances along with physical infrastructure constraints put housing out of reach. But further, the decision making at the board level became frustratingly byzantine.

You also had to have a different set of skills. It wasn't just business skills. It was this ability to be able to kind of read the political or the media and to be . . . when I thought about it too much it all just seemed so convoluted. Why couldn't we build houses? There wasn't the money. . . . There wasn't the grids.

Because of the relatively small population of Assynt in general, even with the largest village of Lochinver sited close to its borders, the Foundation cycled through a large proportion of the nearby population in directorship roles.

If you asked, I mean, I would say probably at least a third of people in the village [Lochinver] have been on the Assynt Foundation as a director. And they have all served their time. And it's been a bit of a – they may, they may say it's been a bit of a thankless task. You need to – it needs to mean something more for you to be able to do it, for you to give up your time.

I think I left because I realized I had no ability to effect any change . . . And that – I just kind of lost patience with it a little bit. Or a lot. . . .

But, going back to your question about my comments is – it just seems like a – community land should be embedded within the community. . . . It should be . . . in the veins, kind of thing.

But when you take it out of its context, as some people may see it here, it's-it's – out there it's-it's abstracted. It becomes this weird-shaped thing that nobody quite understands or understands the purpose of it. And when you, when you want to study it, when you want to write a PhD about it, when you're not— unless you want to, unless you want to apply the same framework somewhere else, why would you want to do that? It just seems— it just seems a bit, you know? A bit absurd, you know? [laughing]

Another respondent who served as a director on the Assynt Crofters Trust cited this

dynamic as a problem with the Foundation:

I – looking at the Foundation, for example, broke, you know, not a success by any stretch of the imagination. Um, you know, it was said that, you know, “If it's owned by everybody, it's owned by nobody,” you know?

The-the trouble with the-the Foundation I think, personally, is that the-the directors don't have any stake in it. There's been a huge change in directors over the years of that. And people can come in with all the best intentions. You know, you're there, somebody says, “Would you like to be on the board?” You say, “Yeah, I'll give it a go.” You're a bright guy, you-you bring some ideas. Maybe you meet me. Maybe we fall out. Uh, and then I think, “Well, your ideas are crap.” You think, “Uh, it's just not worth it.” So you just [brushes hands] walk away, say, “I'm sorry. I'm no longer going to be a director.” You've got no stake. There's . . . nothing's stopping you.

He contrasted the dynamic at the Foundation with that at the Assynt Crofters Trust,

which by his telling has no shortage of disputes on the board of directors:

The estate is the very thing that got everyone together in the first place. There's a, there's a matter of pride. A lot of people just don't walk away no matter how difficult life becomes on the board. And we've had b-, not quite blood on the walls, but like it, at the board meeting. Even serious fights and feuds that have gone on for years, but all of these have been . . . put to one's side when the existence of the trust is in any way threatened.

If it looks as though there's going to be a break in the board and a serious rift, then people say, “Whoa, whoa. Too far. Let's talk about this. You know, we've got a responsibility.” And the responsibility is that the-the-the fact that people from all over the world gave money. You know, kids were giving their pocket money to-to the trust to-to get up and running, you know? And it-it makes a difference. And we still have that, I'm-I'm happy to say.

Community enterprise in a shifting economic and political landscape

Popular depictions of the community buyout movement in Scotland often present it as a desire for "self sufficiency," as a means of communities "declaring independence," as one BBC article on the matter put it (MacDonald 2009). A cursory examination of economic activity in any of the localities in this study show, perhaps unsurprisingly, that these caricatures mask the degree to which in which the local economies and entrepreneurial projects remain tied into regional, national, and international economies and governance programs. Community trusts are no exception to this, and while some projects may increase local autonomy and agency, they often do so in concert with support from government programs. In the case of community ownership, programs such as the community right-to-buy and the Scottish Land Fund are the most visible. However, a handful of projects and activities on the Assynt trusts demonstrate how the actions in broader networks arrive and impact the outcome of local enterprises.

Two projects undertaken by the Assynt Foundation have aimed at government programs that, before they were able to come to completion, were withdrawn or closed to new applicants. The Foundation's Community and Arts Building, which sits on a high slope set back behind the Glencanisp Lodge, was originally constructed to be a vehicle for funding through a body then known as the Scottish Arts Council, which has since been renamed Creative Scotland. Built partially with stripped raw logs reclaimed from windfall on the estate's forestry plantations, the building sports a broad "green roof" planted with low grasses. Its front porch offers a dramatic view of Assynt's most iconic peak, Suilven, which also sits on Foundation land.



Assynt Foundation Community and Arts Building, 2016

After the construction of the building, the 2008 financial crash and subsequent austerity policies by the UK government hollowed out funding for arts initiatives, making the originally intended programming for the building impossible. The space is now rented out for various arts activities, but several local leaders and residents lamented that it sat unused far too often.

Similarly, the Foundation's most recent plans for renewable energy projects have collapsed in the wake of a change of government policy. According to then-general manager Gordon Robertson in 2018, there was a potential for 18 different small scale hydroelectric projects on the estate. At the time of my fieldwork, Robertson was pursuing three of those

projects of under 300 kilowatts each, with feasibility studies underway at that point. However, the profitability of those projects relied upon a program in which renewable energy producers received "feed-in tariffs," or extra payments on top of market rates for electricity at the point at which they were injected into the grid. At one point, those tariffs amounted to as much as three times the value of the electricity. The hydroelectric plant built by the Assynt Crofters Trust at Loch Poll operated with such feed-in tariffs, a dependable source of annual revenue which is now the backbone of the ACT's financial stability. In 2018, Robertson lamented to me that the feed-in tariffs for new projects had been cut in half in recent years, and that if the trust had taken up hydroelectric projects earlier that it would have been a financial windfall for the Foundation. Such projects had been debated off and on, but never brought to completion.

In 2019, however, the UK government ended all new applications for the feed-in tariff program, thereby ending at least this round of plans for a financial boost from the estate's hydroelectric capacity. As Robertson, who has since left his position as general manager of the Foundation, said in a quote to Earth Island Journal, "Dreams need the capital funds to deliver them." (Dolton-Thornton 2021)

I emphasize that the hydroelectric plans have collapsed for now, as shifts continue in the broader networks in which these trusts endeavor to launch and maintain projects. In a turn of fortune, the Foundation's Community and Arts Building as well as the nearby lodge ended up playing a part in a smaller but still significant financial boost for the Foundation through two unexpected sources.

Glencanisp Lodge, which Robertson described as having been a "run-down Victorian lodge" in 2005 at the time of the community purchase, has now undergone progressive

renovations since the purchase. Shortly after the buyout, the Foundation renovated the lodge to lease it to hunting groups on a weekly basis. Between my visits in 2016 and 2018, the lodge underwent another renovation, converting it to a bed and breakfast with the old dining room and kitchen converted to an attached restaurant, with a young couple from Assynt operating it. At around the same time, the North Coast 500 tourist promotion of a 500 mile loop driving route starting in Inverness and following the northern coast became a wild success. Given that the route passed directly through Lochinver, the success of the North Coast 500 promotion meant hotel and inn rooms became scarce across Assynt. To the further benefit of the Foundation, an independent film named *Edie* was filmed in Assynt and released in late 2017, becoming a modest success on the film festival circuit. The film centered on an 83 year old woman fulfilling a long-deferred dream of climbing Suilven, the dome-shaped mountain visible from Glencanisp, which further drove tourist interest in the area and specifically the Foundation's land. Robertson estimated to me that lodge-related revenue had subsequently quintupled because the entire tourist season was fully booked. The filming of *Edie* was at least partially facilitated by the Foundation, which rented out the Community and Arts Building to the crew as their on-site headquarters during filming.



The front porch of the Assynt Foundation's Community and Arts Building, with Suilven in the background, 2016. The plants growing on the building's green roof are visible above the eaves.

On a final note, the ACT has not been immune from difficulties in accessing government funds for its projects. As mentioned previously, the primary school in Stoer was the last of three on the North Assynt Estate to close, and is currently in "mothballed" state for lack of pupils. The aging of the population remains a constant concern, both in terms of the survival of crofting as a way of life, which I discuss further below, and in maintaining the overall health of the community. Previously, the ACT made plots of land available between Stoer and Drumbeg for a small set of units of state-subsidized social housing. At the time of my fieldwork, the ACT had approached national housing authorities about obtaining money to build a second round of affordable housing. However, attributed in part to the closure of the

school, in the housing authority's preference forms for applicants, none had placed the North Assynt Estate as a preferred place to live, placing the ACT's project low on the funding priority list.

Assynt divided?

In my travels around rural Scotland discussing community ownership, people would mention the different successes of a number of different trusts. Eigg was perhaps the best well-known, to the point that even those opposed to local buyouts would point to the particulars of its success as an exemplar of why community ownership wouldn't work in another situation. The larger trusts on the Western Isles, with their extensive wind energy and housing projects, often came up. However, as the other cradle of the community buyout movement along with Eigg, Assynt was often mentioned only in regards to its status as the first community buyout to be carried to completion. In a conversation at the annual conference of Community Land Scotland, a national body consisting largely of community trusts, I mentioned the various Assynt trusts. An attendee and community land enthusiast paused for a moment and said, "well, they're a bit more divided up there, aren't they?"

From my survey of attitudes in Assynt, as several of the quotes above demonstrate, this is not an entirely false impression of the situation. While people in Assynt continue to pour long volunteer hours and considerable care and concern into their trusts, a sense of frustration and exasperation with at least one of the various trusts in the district was almost uniform. In casual conversations, some residents (including crofters on ACT land) vented frustration at the Crofter's Trust as being an exclusive or even "elitist" organization. Others

expressed their ongoing frustration at the Foundation for its financial difficulties and failure to bring specific benefits to the community, such as housing.

To be explicit in my position here, my purpose is not to condemn either of the Assynt trusts under study. Both can list some significant accomplishments in their histories, as well as major hurdles they have so far successfully navigated. However, each trust continues to face challenges, quite different from each other. In articulating these analyses, I hope to speak to how these local dynamics of community production interact with these frustrations and difficulties and provide insight into how to navigate them.

The caricature in Assynt, which even those who articulated it to me insisted was largely inaccurate, went something as follows: the ACT was financially stable but controlled by aging crofters unwilling to change anything about the land in the slightest. The Assynt Foundation, by contrast, cycles through its directors which are drawn from incomer retirees without any connection to "the locals," and has only survived from government subsidies underwriting its operations. The Foundation's directors, in this telling, are largely motivated by their own agendas and self-interests, which thereby change whenever the directors terms turn over. To repeat, almost everyone who articulated these to me did so to insist that as the "common understanding" they were more untrue than not, but the articulations were uniform enough to make it clear that contested or not, a baseline narrative existed.

To my reading, however, underneath these exasperations remained a great degree of pride and hope, sometimes frustrations, with community ownership in the area in general. While some whose frustrations with the Foundation had come to a head advocated selling the land back into the private market, most still hoped for a turnaround, noting that as an

unpopulated estate, it would naturally take time to come to maturity. The following from a former Foundation director articulated some common sentiments:

Respondent: And from the outside it looks quite interesting politically in that the Assynt Crofters' seems- basically just kind of give the fingers to whatever SNH was demanding with the deer culling . . . and that can be quite entertaining. But then from another . . . – I mean they hold – the Assynt Crofters hold rights that – and they wield them in a way that the-the Assynt Foundation can't and doesn't because, A, it isn't made up of crofters and, B, . . . the way that it was formed doesn't, would not allow it to do that.

It has to work with, it has to answer to HIE, it has to answer to – because financially it's still not in a position of strength in a way that the Assynt Crofters are. I still have tremendous affection for the Assynt Foundation, and I have tremendous affection for the Assynt Crofters because we are – they really did fight to win the land.

The-the way that they did it, they forced the sale. Um, and – but they are unique in that – the way that the legislation came into-into play to allow community land to be, to be, to be, to be bought is the same as the way that the Assynt Crofters came to manifest or whatever, you know? And so –

Michael: They broke the ground?

Respondent: Yeah. They basically did. They did break the ground.

Through the binding commons model, Assynt's divisions can be understood as at least partially co-produced by the fractured trust ownership and ruptures in its community infrastructure. In the ACT, while any resident may turn up at Flossie's and commiserate, it will largely only be the crofters who have Simpson's "common bond of sheep" to facilitate their conversation, and only crofters can vote or serve as a director. As such, the community infrastructure on the North Assynt Estate is highly functional but largely closed, and businesses such as Drumbeg Stores which one would otherwise expect to be thriving binding commons are heavily fractured from the politics of the trust, and appear to largely subsist off of income from tourists. With this tight closure, non-crofters may find community on the estate difficult to break into. Similarly, with multiple crofts now held in absentee, crofting becomes harder for a newcomer to gain access to on the estate.

The Assynt Foundation, by contrast, has very little community infrastructure to tap into. With no residents on its enormous expanses of land, there is no one to speak local knowledge into the spaces of calculation which will inform it. As the same former director from the previous quote shared about the Foundation and its relation to Lochinver:

Um, it's way out over there, so it's kind of like this – it's not – even though it's there, in the village you're living, you're just kind of living on the fringes of it. So it doesn't really have – you're not part of the foundation. You don't really have anything to do with it. There's that kind of dichotomy.

Also notably, in my interviews I asked respondents who the considerable work of community ownership fell to. To an extent far greater than on any other estate, those involved with the Assynt Foundation said simply, "the directors." Without extensive community infrastructure, the Foundation can only recruit directors and then rely on them for the provision of the volunteer labor needed to maintain the trust. Further, without this collective labor to continue to expand and strengthen the ties around the binding commons, information about what happens on the estate does not move through the community well. Breakdowns in internal communication within the Foundation appear to exacerbate this. As Marianne Simpson recalled regarding the woodchip boiler, information about the costs of the forestry were not being shared with directors. Another former Foundation director echoed this:

Bacon: You told me a little bit about when, one of the worst periods. What was bad about it?

Respondent: Secrecy. Secrecy. Yeah. There was one individual for a period of time where, you know, would not divulge information that should have been divulged, should have been quite open, should have been freely shared. But oh no.

Finally, it is notable that the most central hub in Assynt, the village of Lochinver, remains almost entirely privately owned, with the exception of the An Cala center, owned by the Assynt Community Development Trust. Where in other areas, trusts have worked to

reinforce the central binding commons of the shop, in Lochinver the SPAR and its associated post office remain owned by the mistrusted Vestey family, and its operations remain a subject of frustration from the residents. To further complicate matters, members of the Vestey family continue to hold "ransom strips" surrounding Lochinver, or narrow strips of land held with the intention of maintaining consultation for or control of any planned project or infrastructure which crosses them.

Almost uniformly, respondents in Assynt identified "Assynt" as at least one major answer when I asked what they thought of as their community. People on remote corners of the postal district would still confidently tell me they knew everyone who lived in the broader district. As such, the intangible sense of community identity in Assynt is not fractured. However, the community infrastructure which could ameliorate the frustrations of Assynt's various trusts is ruptured or limited in critical places due to the lack of or insufficiency of the binding commons which could span those ruptures. The division, in comparison to other estates, is not somehow a failing of the people of Assynt, but of community infrastructure.

Eigg

The common perception of Eigg is somewhat different. Commonly held up as the chief exemplar of the possibilities of community ownership, it appears both in popular media depictions as a place with no conflict (for instance, a 2018 CBS 60 Minutes package) or in British neoliberal media outlets as a place riven by division (a 2003 Sunday Times piece declaring "Paradise Lost!"). For this section, the perspective I take is one of a slow emergence of Eigg's rather remarkable list of accomplishments, not as revolutionary but as the slow

accumulation of community infrastructure via the growth and assembly of binding commons. In this process, human and non-human actors are slowly validated and incorporated into the functioning of a community which started out with few resources and little empowerment.

Failed projects in the Schellenberg years

Schellenberg's tenure as owner of Eigg was notable for many things, but a lack of attempted novel projects on the island was decidedly not one of them. His period of ownership opened with great fanfare, promising a combination of wildlife protection with expansion of the tourism business and the establishment of a craft center, along with a revitalization of the island's farming. An ongoing problem, however, was that Schellenberg's ideas of enterprise often ran far ahead of his implementation of them. The farm revitalization experienced a significant setback when Schellenberg and his wife divorced, and plans to operate Eigg's farms as extra grazing lands for the herd on her mainland farm fell apart. Because of the loss of the connected herd, the operations budget for the farm was cut to the bone. Employees who worked on the farm were not even allowed to buy fuel for their tractors. Tourist brochures advertised a wide range of activities, including pony trekking and day cruises, many of which turned out to not be available when the tourists showed up (Dressler 2007, 158-160).

The craft center launched after recruiting several craftspersons to the island, but fell apart as Schellenberg refused to give stable leases to those he hired, attempting to replace them on an annual basis, leaving several who had gotten attached to the place (including

Wes and Maggie Fyffe) to seek out more stable tenancies in the crofts at the northern end of the island. As Maggie Fyffe recalled to me:

[The craft center] was—it was a good idea but his his biggest, in my eyes anyway, I mean, the—och, there were a lot stuff happened here but there were a lot of people who wanted to stay. They were in an estate house, maybe using the workshop, wood turner house and all . . . And if you were to give people leases on houses and buildings, then it would have been okay, but he wouldn't. He wouldn't, he wouldn't give anybody any security whatsoever.

So that's kind of really was at the root of everything that came after, I would say.

The lack of leases was one of two sides of the coin of the problem of housing on the island. Without the security of leases, residents were hesitant to make any substantial improvements to their dwellings. At the same time, Schellenberg frequently refused to make even the most basic repairs to the estate-owned housing on the island, intentionally keeping them and the community hall, like the shop, in a state of disrepair. As Schellenberg himself boasted, “I’ve kept its style slightly run down – the Hebrides feel.” In 1991 it was that disrepair that caused a visiting acquaintance of Schellenberg’s, Liz Lyon, to reach out to crofting revitalization enthusiast Tom Forsyth. As a financial dispute was forcing Schellenberg to put the island up for sale, Forsyth in turn helped put together the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (IEHT) along with Lyon, with the intent of pursuing a buyout that would put control of the island in the hands of residents (Dressler 2007, 171).

His efforts in natural resource management did not go much better. Government tax breaks were available for expanding forestry, which Schellenberg applied for and got grant aid for over 200 hectares of moorland to be planted with Sitka spruce. However, in part of planting this, the estate drained the Blar Dubh, the healthiest and most productive peat bog on the island, and planted spruce through it. The result was the severe degradation of the peat bog and converting it to wet moorland. (Dressler 2007, p160) By the time of my

fieldwork in 2018, Trust employees explained to me that the plantations of monocultured, non-native Sitka were effectively impossible to harvest as timber for commercial extraction, and that the Trust forestry subsidiary was now felling them largely to sell as fuel wood.

From 'Maggie's table' to community ownership

Within the binding commons model, two closely related ways in which community infrastructure may be deployed by the community as a whole are *enterprise* and *formalization*. Each involves the community taking a step beyond its current bounds. In the case of enterprise, it may take on new forms of property, labor, or obligations of maintenance and care. In the case of formalization, it may take steps to refine its decision-making processes or its relations to the state or other hierarchies. If these steps continue to be successful, the result can be a snowball effect, in which a relatively small binding commons begets a somewhat larger one, and the scope of the community infrastructure and associated community economy grows and expands.

In her book on the island's history, *Eigg: The Story of an Island*, Camile Dressler titles one of the chapters "The Rise of the Community." The story in this chapter picks up after landlord Keith Schellenberg's grand plans for an major increase in holiday facilities and an artists haven run out of a craft center on the island had begun to wither. Further, as Dressler puts it, "Crofting as an activity on the island was not in a healthy state." (Dressler 2007, 163) Older crofters were aging out of their working years and younger ones were leaving the island for better opportunities. Incomers like Maggie and Wes Fyffe, who had been recruited to the island by Schellenberg to work in the craft center, lost their positions with the estate

but managed to secure a croft. In the midst of a population of a few dozen people, music and the winter ceilidhs

became the time when close bonds were forged between the people who had come to live on the island and those who were born or brought up on it. The old croft house in Cuagach where Wes and Maggie Fyffe now lived became 'the' ceilidh house on the island, where each peripatetic party would end. So many tunes were played around their fire and so many discussions were held around their table and the two were so often merged together that a fiddle tune was eventually composed in praise of 'Maggie's table.' (Dressler 2007, 164)

Dressler further writes:

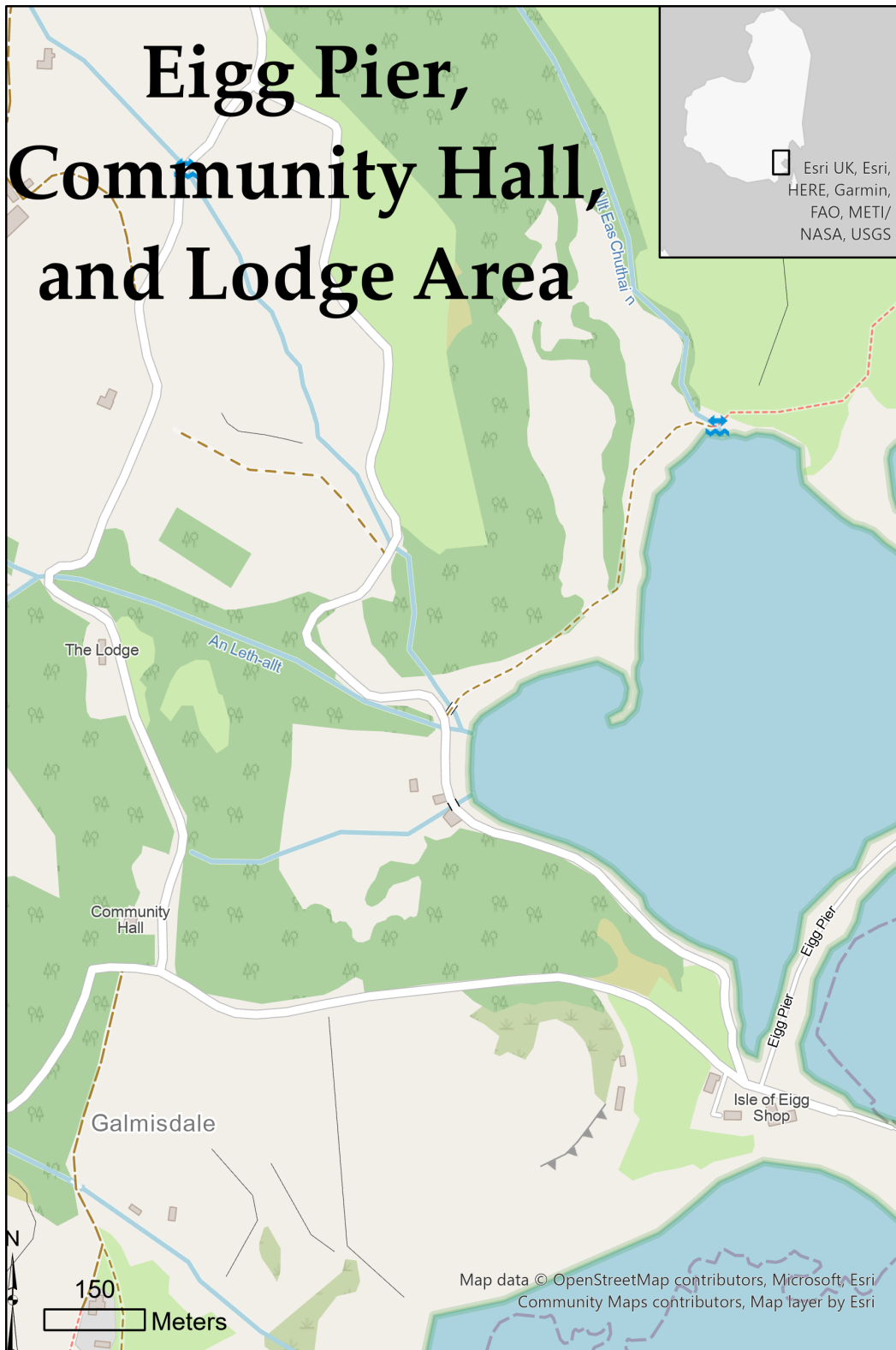
It was through working and socialising together, through helping each other in the hard business of island living that everyone ended up sharing a common sense of place, a common sense of belonging. Raising children on the island was a further step in consolidating that sense of belonging. Another was taking on essential jobs or responsibilities held until then by indigenous islanders, whether it was postman or ferryman, coastguard, special constable or fireman. This went a long way towards helping integration, for without incomers to take on these jobs, the island would have effectively ceased to operate as a viable unit. (Dressler 2007, 165)

These details provide much more than just color and detail of island life in the late 1970s—they show a traditional form of Highland social event which gathers in the newcomers and appropriates a slice of space and time in one of their houses. The ceilidh gatherings around "Maggie's table" here appear as a very small binding commons, but they closely fit the definition. Dressler does not make the distinction explicit, but in her chapter on the community, these descriptions of 'Maggie's table' are immediately followed by a section on the 1983 founding of the Isle of Eigg Residents Association (IERA) and its ascension to charitable status three years later. While IERA spent most of the 1980's focused on issues such as retaining a doctor in the Small Isles and addressing the dilapidated state of the housing on the island, as well as attempting to obtain a new lease for the community hall, it established a set of relationships and decision-making arrangements which would later be deployed in the buyout. The first secretary of the IERA was, not coincidentally, Maggie

Fyffe. Dressler notes, up until then, Fyffe's contribution had been to be "the token incomer' on the hall committee and her role had been mostly confined to making sandwiches for the ceilidh and organizing who would make the tea." (Dressler 2007, 166) As such, through the seemingly trivial work of hosting winter parties and organizing tea and sandwiches, Fyffe was able to establish herself as a trustworthy member of the interior of the community.

The trust, launched entirely by non-residents so as to protect the residents themselves from reprisals by Schellenberg, was of course groundbreaking. While it didn't gain ownership of the island until six years later, the launch of the trust inspired the creation of the Assynt Crofters Trust (see, among others, MacPhail 2002 and Dressler 2010) which completed its buyout during the ensuing years of ownership turmoil on Eigg. However, the groundwork for ownership of the island had been laid in the 1980s through the Residents' Association activities of raising money for a new community hall and advocating for more stable leases which would permit housing repairs. By the time the buyout happened in 1997, residents were thoroughly comfortable with advocacy through the residents association, with detailed plans already on the table from years in waiting for the buyout to occur. Indeed, shortly after the buyout, Maggie Fyffe moved from being secretary of the IERA to secretary of IEHT, a position which she has held since²⁶. As such the new trust took off at a fast clip, completing the new An Laimhrig facility for the shop and tea room near the pier, as well as immediately producing stronger leases and assisting with grant obtainment for upfitting the decaying housing stock on the island.

²⁶ At my 2018 fieldwork trip, the Trust was in the process of trying to lay the groundwork for Fyffe to finally retire from the position. I have yet to see any announcements from the Trust that this has happened—I assume the coronavirus epidemic has, as elsewhere, put some plans on hold.



The informal ties, which formed around the need for collective work to maintain the viability of life on the island, generated the community infrastructure needed to launch the

IERA—an action of enterprise and formalization. Subsequently, the Trust buyout represents round of enterprise and formalization of relationships, which in turn produces a much larger set of binding commons grounded in the relationship of ownership of estate buildings and rights.

The slow emergence of an electrical commons

As discussed in the previous chapter, the desire to provide electricity for the shop led to the redevelopment of an old hydroelectric plant attached to the lodge. At the same time, other residents began installing their own small hydroelectric power plants at their houses or crofts. Eventually, an island-wide effort emerged to link them together, along with new windmills on the southern side of the island and an array of solar panels, all then linked together with the new Eigg electricity grid.

Retired head teacher at Eigg Primary and current Eigg resident, Hilda Ibrahim, recounts the trajectory of the development of the electrical system, which has become Eigg's signature project, and her early efforts to get the island's primary school children interested in the project:

Ibrahim: The school was already powered by windmill when I got here. So we were already using renewable energy as a school. We did have gas fires in the classroom, really ancient, awful gas things it was my job to light every morning.

But the actual electricity for the lighting and computers and everything was provided by windmill, and we had a generator which only went on, you know, maybe once every two or three weeks, to back up the batteries. . . .

Bacon: So green energy . . . you said you weren't involved in it much at all. . . . Did you hear any discussions about the decision to install the electrical grid?

Ibrahim: Oh, yes, and I mean, that was why I felt it was really important for the children to be involved, because this was something that was going to change their lives, and, so we had people coming in who were involved in you, you know, this original planning and the decision making, would come in and visit the school and talk to the children about it. So, I felt it was quite important that the children at the

time in the school had a sense of ownership of it and an understanding of how it was produced.

As Ibrahim explains, the grid grew out of not just the new hydroelectric plant at the lodge which powered the shop, but from numerous projects which had been set up by individuals at their houses.

Ibrahim: In the actual Eigg grid, there are three hydros, and all three of those were preexisting. They'd just been developed and enlarged and so on. The one at Laig had been working for a long time. One of the people who sort of masterminded the whole Eigg project, he'd got his own windmill and hydro set up at his house, and one of the school trips was to go up and visit his hydro and see his windmill. And I was really surprised, because I've always thought of hydroelectric schemes as being enormous buildings . . . So people had windmills. Some people had windmills. Some people had hydros. Most people used diesel generators to produce their energy, though.

Bacon: So you had this very, I guess, individualized energy generation scheme. . . . Particularly as you talk about this, children having a sense of ownership of it, at what point was the turn made to, let's do this for the whole island?

Ibrahim: It had been a, sort of an idea for probably about four or five years before it actually happened, because these things take time to develop and work out what was possible. But what we were trying to do, because most people generated their own electricity through diesel generators, and we were – you know, we'd already – were building up this idea that we were a green island, and we felt that, you know, this was an important thing. So this was the first really big project, if you like, that the whole island did.

And, I mean, I can remember the first day that, you know, everybody got switched on, because they made a decision that all the cables would be underground. There were no overland pylons, so you couldn't see any of that. It wouldn't detract from our beautiful island. And the first day that the electricity got switched on, everybody was nearly whispering, because it was so quiet, because you would hear – every house would have generators chugging along. And if you went for a walk, you know, as you got near a house, you would hear a generate chugging away, and as you walked past it, that noise would fade. . . .

As such, having followed up its entrepreneurial projects of the construction of An Laimhrig at the pier with its nearby hydroelectric plant and a renovation of the community hall, the electrical project becomes the “first really big project” that the whole island undertook. Notably, this enterprise assembled the other existing technological and entrepreneurial projects in a novel way. Previously, the construction of An Laimhrig had

expanded and improved of the maintenance of the shop and tea room, and had drawn in the of electrical power from the lodge's old hydroelectric system. This new binding commons brought power generation and the growing local expertise around it into the service of the community as a whole. The new power grid took a much larger step, and bound in the individually-owned generators along with the expertise of their operators, plus brought the benefit to residents out from just the pier area to most of the houses on the island.

The management of the grid required some very conventional commons-type relationships, with specific rules and limits on appropriation of electricity. However, beyond the dynamics of Ostrom's design principles, the islanders produced a series of stickers to help people translate kilowatt numbers into common household tasks, thereby allowing the requirements of the electrical system to be absorbed easily into vernacular daily life:

We decided that we would cap use of the electricity to five kilowatts for every house. So that meant that you could only use up to five kilowatts at any one time, and businesses have 10 kilowatts. And we spent a lot of time sort of informing everybody what – you know, how much power a, a kettle used or a toaster or a washing machine or a hair dryer and things like that. And it's now just completely second nature. You just don't think about it. We had stickers originally that we stuck onto appliances so that you knew, you know, when you put your kettle on it was three kilowatts and so on. And you learned very quickly to not put on, sort of like, the kettle and the toaster or, you know, don't use your hair dryer when you've got lots of other things going.

The electrical system has now also begun to act as a boundary-defining agent for the island as a whole. In 2018, the trust had dedicated land to more government-owned housing to be available to new residents in the social housing system, but had set a moratorium on new housing after that. The reason was that the electrical grid was both reaching its generation capacity, and that the windmills and other generation facilities were starting to age. In theory, of course, a new resident could bring their own diesel generator with them

and not be connected to the island grid, but this would re-introduce the old chugging noise of the generator. While the trust examines ways to fund replacements and expansions for its generation capacity, expansion of the island population is encumbered.

Exclusion: Salmon farms

I visited Eigg twice for fieldwork in 2018, with both coinciding with IERA meetings regarding a proposal from Marine Harvest Scotland to build a salmon farm off of Eigg's coastline. Salmon farms have become a contentious issue in northwest Scotland, as the cold, relatively calm inner seas and sea lochs of the region make for ideal places for the large cages for farming salmon. The farms provide much needed employment for local workers, and pier, storage, and launching fees provide income for landlords, including community trusts such as the Pairc Trust. However, the farms have been widely criticized by environmental and humane animal treatment groups, as the fish get diseases and sea lice at far higher rates than wild salmon, and the cages cause considerable disruption to the seabed. At the time of the meeting, each of the other three Small Isles had an operational fish farm, and Marine Harvest was approaching Eigg for permission to build there. A different salmon farming company had previously had a proposed farm off Eigg rejected. Ultimately, Marine Harvest was likewise rejected by a vote of all residents, largely because in meetings of the IERA no consensus had been reached, with some business owners wanting the increased revenue that farm workers would bring in.

Fyffe: Well, you know, we, we agreed at that meeting that we'd get a few people here from different sides of the fence to talk it through, and then eventually that'll – that is likely to go to an actual ballot. Um, and that's the end of it, you know.

Bacon: So do – and people – if people feel that they've had their say, even if it didn't go their way sort of, they're willing to go along with it.

Fyffe: Yeah. That's, you know, that's, that's the way it is. You know, it's the only way you could – you know, that was like buying the island. You know, we had to have a majority of folk in favor of it. Um, we had, we had a ballot then, and it was a big majority in favor. So that's the way it is, you know. *That's end of story.* That's what we do.

Bacon: And those decisions don't tend to get revisited or, or—

Fyffe: Well, the fish farm's interesting, because we are revisiting it. But I think this time around we'll look at it in a way that, um, *finished the discussion, you know, like the vote*, I think, will be, you know, we do not want fish farms, full stop. You know, we're not going to go through this process every time we get a, um –

Bacon: Because there was a previous fish farm which had come and done a presentation?

Fyffe: Yeah.

Bacon: And so your sense of the way the vote's going to go is that it would be in opposition –

Maggie: Yeah. And that's merely on environmental grounds and that sort of – that's what most, you know, most people thought.

From my observations of the meeting, a few more recently arrived residents, including at least one who had not lived on the island the requisite two years and so did not have a vote, passionately expressed opposition to the fish farms. Another resident replied and said they could talk after the meeting, at which point she reassured the first resident that the farm would not be approved. As another resident told me, "it all gets decided down at the shop anyway." Marine Harvest was subsequently invited to give a formal presentation to the residents at a meeting at the community hall, after which a ballot was held and the farm rejected.

I emphasized one piece of Fyffe's quote above to show that one critical aspect of Eigg's somewhat unique decision making apparatus is the reaching of *community closure*.

Previously the vote had left some ambiguity among community members about the possibility of a future fish farm. By contrast, Fyffe was establishing the current vote as

definitive. Once the decision was made, Fyffe assured me that, in STS terms, the controversy became closed.

Discussions

Common grazings and crofting in transition

At this point in the dissertation, I have now discussed commons extensively without mentioning the most conventionally styled commons in these areas, the common grazings land allocated to each crofting township. In my planning for this study, I included plans to focus on the various forms of common property management regimes that exist around common grazings, and how conflicts around use of them and regulation of appropriation was achieved. In its original framing, this turned out to be entirely a dead end. On none of the trusts that I visited was overuse or overgrazing a concern, nor was unregulated use considered a problem. To a limited degree, this reflects the existence of an already formalized decision making and conflict resolution body, the Crofters Commissions, which are appointed boards with regional representatives. It is these boards that make formal decisions about either placing land into crofting or removing it from crofting, as well as setting the maximum number of animals allowed on the common grazings.

However, most of the problems with the Crofting Commissions among residents I spoke to regarded their inability or refusal to act to enforce regulations against absentee crofters or the requirements that the croft be worked. In on-tape and off-tape conversations as well as in local newspaper articles, residents characterized the Crofting Commission as having reached a kind of sclerotic state in which any new changes were hard to come by and

enforcement of rules which might be controversial or cause consternation in local communities were strenuously avoided. At the same time, many residents neglected to use the common grazings much at all, and those that did commented that the sumings (per-croft stock limits on the grazings) were largely ignored because the grazings were under-grazed anyway, and therefore no conflicts arose on them.

It would be inaccurate to say, however, that stock levels on the common grazings were not a matter of common concern. Rather, a pervasive concern, particularly among older crofters, was that not enough new crofters were taking up sheep raising, thereby threatening the ongoing existence of crofting. This concern does not emerge from nostalgia (although that cannot be entirely dismissed) but rather from the widespread labor cooperation which happens in execution of the chores of raising sheep.

Ray MacKay, the then-vice chair of the Assynt Crofters Trust, explains:

Sheep numbers have dropped hugely, by a huge factor, in this part of the world. And they're likely to do so even more in the years to come. So sheep will become a very rare sight rather than a very common site. When we came here there were sheep everywhere. Underlying all of this is that crofting is – traditional crofting is dying.

In the previous chapter, I relayed the conversation by Marianne Simpson about conversations at her store, Flossie's, which centered around the "common bond of sheep." In Simpson's retelling, it was limited to just shared information about what chores of sheep husbandry were happening that particular week. However, as , the physical demands of caring for the sheep mean that neighbors often assist each other or even take over certain tasks in terms of care for each others sheep. MacKay elaborates:

It's a huge commitment to look after a flock. I-I hurt my leg a few days ago, and so, you know, I should've been out—some of my sheep should already have been clipped because the weather's been great. You can see the fleece is coming off some of them already. I can't do it. So I'm conscious that I've got a number of sheep and my neighbors' to clip, and I've not done it. That's one of the things you have. And

along with the clipping goes—you dose them for internal parasites, you put stuff on the top for external parasites. You inject the lambs, you've injected the mothers before. The lambs get an injection when they're born, now they're getting another injection, and then they're fairly safe from these diseases that you're injecting them against. So all of that has to happen in the next couple of months.

The decline in sheep numbers is currently the most readily observable change in the structure and activities of crofting community, but it is in many ways the latest of a form of traditional crofting to decline. Ishbel Groom, a native and resident of the Marvaig crofting township on the Pairc estate, echoes many other crofters' comments and elaborates in this extended quote on the other aspects of crofting life which have already largely disappeared:

Groom: But, you know crofting was very much the backbone of community life. And I don't think any of us really understood it now until we see now what we're left with. I know that crofting as it was has disappeared, but—

Interviewer: And what-what, by crofting specifically?

Groom: The crofting lifestyle meant that, you know, this is a croft. We live in a croft. The land runs down to the sea in the center of the village there. And so everyone who had a croft, and most people would've lived in a croft. And they would rear sheep. They would have cows for milk. So to supply the domestic—you would sell some sheep and earn a little bit of money out of that. But primarily the way you'd food source—you had your own milk. You could do your potatoes. You could do kind of meals for the animals. And so it was a small holding that was supporting that family. You also cut peat out on the moors. And most people did that on top of paying day job employment.

So the only way to successfully make that work when you can't be hands on all the time, was that people had to do it cooperatively. . . . For example, a peat cutting Saturday—there would be an agreed sort of vote as it were that this Saturday was our peats. So various people around would come and help us cut that then and then next Saturday was somebody else's, or the next Tuesday, whatever. So we all helped one another, and that. But it wasn't, ah—it was quite structured. Do you know, there was a clear expectation. It wasn't just a casual thing. So if you ask another example, my uncles who lived round this area, they were fisherman. So they were away all week. So their wives, their respective wives would work on each other's crofts during the week doing the potatoes, or doing—you know, looking after the animals. Whatever needed to be done.

So, um, so *there was a village approach to the tasks that needed doing*. And that was how everything got done. Why people were still able to earn a living as well. *And that creates community. There's no escape from it, it creates community*. What's happened now, um, over time and it's just the way life is changing. Crofting is now very much a solitary affair. We do try and help one another out to some degree, but most of us are

so heavily committed on the, you know, paid work or paid employment front that we just don't have the time.

To put it in the terms of this dissertation, Groom asserts that crofting community was effectively produced by a cluster of binding commons which reinforced each other and created a sense of mutual obligations. "Crofting," rather than just being a complex form of land tenure, is a foundational set of relations which produce a broader community infrastructure. That infrastructure in turn co-produces the necessary conditions of mutual labor and information sharing making life possible under conditions of relative hardship. The common grazings themselves remain implicitly present here, as they are essential for sheep and the peat cutting require access to the grazings and the moors (often formally designated as common grazings as well). But commons management here is more than just allocation of the "natural" resource of the grassland or peat, but also of the collective labor involved in managing and harvesting those resources.

Groom, like other respondents, was largely elegiac in her comments on crofting. The crofting life has passed by, in many of these tellings, because technological advancements such as oil heating have replaced peat or wood fired stoves. I find these explanations clearly relevant but insufficient to explain a transition away from the largely cooperative economy of crofting for most of the 20th century. Despite the narratives of strong technological conservatism in crofting life, in its roughly two centuries of existence, crofting as an activity has repeatedly changed and adopted new forms of production. As mentioned in previous chapters, crofting originally meant kelp, oats, hay, and cattle but not sheep, whereas by the end of the 20th century sheep rearing for sale to southern farms has become the dominant form of production on crofts, with the other forms of production having fallen away.

In this vein, it is notable that crofters in every locality I visited were trying and adopting new forms of production. On Eigg, one croft was growing willow shoots for basket weaving. On Mull, the forest crofts were part of the community woodland, which were being evaluated on Pairc as well. In Assynt, crofters were re-introducing goats and pigs. Further, crofters on all of these estates were experimenting with small scale forms of renewable energy on their own crofts, from low tech solar water heaters to household wind and hydro installations. Many crofters, including several of my respondents, make significant additional income by renting either parts of their house, a house on a de-crofted piece of their croft, or a house on an adjacent croft as a holiday house during the summer. As Groom specifies, however, crofting has become "a solitary affair" unlike the forms of production that crofting communities adopted over the preceding century.

It is this transition from solitary production to cooperative production which underlies much of the worry about the loss of crofting community. Notably, the protections on crofting tenure remain as strong as ever, and crofters continue to enjoy access to extensive common grazings. At the same time, crofters continue to use their crofts to make a living, but the technologies and techniques involved have changed. On crofts in Assynt, Pairc, and Eigg, these holiday rentals, either in-house or on secondary houses, now provide critical income for those with crofting tenancies. However, these rentals are managed almost entirely individually. It is beyond this author's knowledge to suppose how vacation rentals might be collectively worked in the same way that kelp harvests and peat bogs once were. There is some evidence at hand, though, that even in the deployment of new technologies, collective identity may still support collective enterprise.

That evidence comes from Pairc, where the initial impetus for the buyout came from crofters' refusal to accept unequal payments for the development of wind turbines on common grazings. As trust chair Angus McDowall told me in 2016, shortly after the completion of the 13 year buyout effort:

The first meeting that started all this off was when the landlords's agent contacted the grazings clerks of each village em to come to a meeting and they offered us a big bag of money to allow around 125 wind turbines to be on our land. It all sounded very good, but it was also very divisive, because not all crofters would get benefit out of it. And because of that, and because of the railroad tactics that was being used, ehm, the community as a whole went against it. We weren't against the wind farm per se, but we were against the methods and the lack of consultation.

A done deal, basically, before we got involved. And we've, Pairc Trust was born out of that— meetings. We—the first meeting was in November with the landlord's agent. Sorry, December 2002. And then, in January 2003, the Pairc Trust Steering board was formed.

As McDowall told me, because of his status as a crofter in the township of Habost, the position of the wind farms would have meant that he was entitled to one of the largest payments. Rather than accept the unequal payments, the trust entered into the crofting compulsory right to buy process, which ultimately achieved ownership of the estate. The financing and logistics under which the proposed wind farm would have operated have changed, meaning that the Pairc wind farm has never been completed. However, the nearby Eishken shooting estate recently completed a wind farm, which required land lease agreement with the Pairc Trust for road and transmission lines improvement. These lease agreements have provided the first steady form of income for the trust's finances.

The bar and the ceilidh

I close this chapter on local knowledge and local facts with a discussion of a space of knowledge and fact production which I can neither ignore nor truly examine in a robust,

empirical fashion. That space could be broadly called "craic," although to be specific I refer to the bars, ceilidhs, and other spaces of relaxed gathering. I can say without hesitation that "the bar" (or on Eigg, "the pier") serves as a powerful space of community infrastructure. Indeed, the progression of the binding commons detailed above in the section on "Maggie's table" shows the importance of the ceilidh in producing the nascent community infrastructure which grew to be able to buy an island. While I have discussed it less here, many respondents on Eigg talked about the ceilidhs that continue to happen on Eigg as being a critical part of membership in the community. However, to fully examine the dynamics of how facts are produced would require far superior skills at ethnography than those I possess.

During many of my interviews, trust leaders would, often in frustration, refer to "what you hear down at the bar" about the trust. In many situations, the narrative in the director's meeting is met with opposition at the bar. One former director of the Assynt Foundation recounted:

The interesting experience for me, looking at it, is that . . . when you're in something there's a certain way or . . . there's a certain kind of ethic or culture. But then, when you step away from that and you're talking about things in the pub, and they're like, "Uh, what's the Foundation doing now? Why are they doing this? Why are they doing that?" It becomes entertainment to the-the people at the bar. And that's where a lot of the antithesis comes out.

Off transcript, one resident of Eigg warned me about a particular performance of cynicism at the pier. I recounted this to the same former director in Assynt:

Bacon: I've heard on another trust – somebody's told me . . . "Now, be careful believing anything you hear down there because there's a pressure to be seen as one of the lads." And being seen one of the lads means to be expressing a certain kind of cynicism towards everything.

Respondent: Yes.

Bacon: Would you say – and that if you pulled people aside privately, a lot of them would be far less negative or skeptical than they were sort of in, say, the pub? Would you say that's accurate here or –

Respondent: Well, yes, I do, yeah. I do definitely think that's real. And I do think that's centered around alcohol. And I do think that's centered—. . . I mean Highland culture I think does revolve around the pub. . . . It's difficult to live here and to not drink. I can kind of – I can – I can straddle the two okay because I lived that way. My-my [relation] works in the pub. . . . And I play fiddle. So to be in a pub, I can be doing something, but not having to participate. But that-that's still difficult, you know? And when you are drinking and when you're talking about community lands and everybody's—. . . I think what I've found is they also, they can use it as an outlet for all their negative emotions. So they just kind of pin it on one thing when there's maybe more things going on. If that makes sense

So to some degree the "conversation at the bar" is a performance of negativity. However, again gesturing to my own limits as an ethnographer, there are other forms of knowledge production happening in the highland bar. In two different instances, I found my own role as a researcher being interrogated as I went to get dinner and a drink in these spaces. In one, a long-time resident of Eigg began an interaction with me with a general ribbing about my choice of a baked good from the cafe. After learning quickly that I had little skill in the rapid "banter" of the bar, he began asking questions which were friendly and touched with a heavy dose of irreverence and jocularitas, but which gradually but surely narrowed on what my intentions were in terms of using the data I was collecting.

In another instance in Dervaig on Mull, I was talking to a local resident about my research in general, and noting the coincidence that I had by chance taken the ferry over to Ulva on the very day that the buyout activists had learned that their purchase had been accepted and that a purchase agreement was now in place. He had shared this with his brother and cousin, who were also in the bar, and somewhere in the retelling his cousin understood that I had claimed to be the land agent managing the signing of the agreement. Fearing that his cousin was the victim of a "piss take," one pulled me aside. Physically

holding me in place with a grip on my hand and arm, he calmly but sternly interrogated me (in a thick and inebriated Hebridean accent) about if I was in fact the signing land agent and if not, why I had claimed that.

As I spoke to one couple, who had recently retired to the island, about community ownership at a bar and restaurant, they told me:

Every Friday all the arguments break out, but then everyone gets too drunk and they all forget it by Saturday morning.

Based on the way looks and information were passed around the bar around me in ways that I found utterly mystifying, I have wondered if the arguments were indeed forgotten, or if the bar provided a place for a very particular kind of community infrastructure.

Remembering the nervousness of residents in talking about their landlords and security of tenure, I have wondered about how conversations may happen, effectively, "in silence." For any conversation which happens after an evening of drinking, there are any number of forms of plausible deniability which emerge. Things can be said which can later be dismissed as simply "the alcohol talking," or possibly as "just banter." Because arguments happen as a matter of course, serious disagreements may be aired at the bar. Further, if one hears something objectionable or problematic, alcohol-induced forgetfulness can always be plausibly claimed.

I repeat once more that I lack the data, the experience, the skills, and the theory to do more than gesture to these questions. What I can speak to, however, is that community infrastructure and fact production does, importantly, move through spaces with similar dynamics. On the one hand, it would be scarcely surprising if an American graduate student found impenetrable a piece of community infrastructure designed to obfuscate local knowledge production from a landlord or other hostile local party. On the other, I wonder

about the degree to which community trusts' difficulty in tapping specific populations of locals for directors and gaining their support is in part a fracture between the community infrastructure around the bar.

Conclusions

*Who owns this landscape?
Has owning anything to do with love?
For it and I have a love-affair, so nearly human
we even have quarrels.*

excerpt from "A Man In Assynt" - Norman MacCaig

The Scottish community land ownership movement is now approaching nearly 30 years since it began with the buyout efforts on Eigg and the North Assynt Estate. The movement is as remarkable in its existence as it is in its successes. Hundreds of resident groups have organized and fundraised in order to purchase the private estates on which they lived, then hold them in community ownership. Well over a half-million acres have entered into community ownership via negotiated sales, asset transfer, or sales forced by the rights to buy enacted in the 2003 and 2016 Land Reform (Scotland) Acts. These estates represent around 3% of the total land area in Scotland, with 25,000 people living directly on these estates as of 2021.

In the history of this movement, perhaps a dozen people can reasonably claim to be as influential as Maggie Fyffe. As the secretary of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust since its inception, she is frequently called on to do interviews for journalists, documentary makers, and of course the odd graduate student arriving for a few days on the island to study community ownership. In her interviews with me as well as with recorded media, Fyffe's conversation usually keeps to amicable but expert reflection on the specifics of Eigg's experiences in community ownership. She is most expansive on details about how the

buyout happened, what its local motivations were, what the trust has accomplished since, and what it is working on now. While many of my other interviewees would readily venture into more abstract theories of land ownership, the nature of community, political identities, and many other topics, Fyffe largely deferred. I say all this to emphasize that when Fyffe effectively told me the same short phrase in interviews two years apart, it struck me as neither accidental nor trivial.

"It's Eigg that holds us together."

- Maggie Fyffe, interview, 2016

"Everybody loves Eigg. That's the bit that glues everybody together."

- Maggie Fyffe, interview, 2018

As it happens, she phrased the sentence in two slightly different literal constructions. In one, Eigg is doing the acting, actively holding its residents together. In the other, it is the affective relation of love that the residents hold for the island that does the gluing. Both comments arose during conversations about how the trust navigates disagreements and difficulties that arise in collective ownership of a small, windy, difficult-to-reach island surrounded by areas with shrinking populations. In Fyffe's phrasing, it is simultaneously both the island itself and the love for the island that holds the population together, mediating the vital collective labor and decision making that keeps it functioning.

While Fyffe's statement was unique to her, the general sentiment was not all that unusual. Indeed, an Eigg volunteer coordinator shared a similar thought as she was showing me around the tree nursery, where her own volunteer efforts involved growing saplings

from seeds collected on the island to supply a major reforestation project. I asked her what motivated her to do all this work. It was the love of the place, she replied. If we take Fyffe's statement seriously (and there is an abundance of evidence that we should), "Eigg" has a power to hold people together, through people's love for the place. This power allows community ownership on the island to not just survive, but to produce a history-making sustainable electricity grid among other signature achievements.

These kinds of statements emerged in interviews from leaders and residents in all the areas I visited:

"The estate is the very thing that got everyone together in the first place. There's a matter of pride. A lot of people just don't walk away no matter how difficult life becomes on the board. And we've had, not quite blood on the walls, but like it, at the board meeting. Even serious fights and feuds that have gone on for years, but all of these have been . . . put to one's side when the existence of the trust is in any way threatened. If it looks as though there's going to be a break in the board and a serious rift, then people say, 'Whoa, whoa. Too far. Let's talk about this. You know, we've got a responsibility.'"

- Ray MacKay, Assynt Crofters Trust director

"I've always said the island itself has a way of sorting people out."

- Charlie Galli, Eigg resident

"I think farther flung areas, say Ormaig, which is one of the older villages I think I would say to you [no one should build there now]. Because I think areas like that tell the story of Ulva's history. And they show you where people used to live, and I think that shows you the clear story of, of how bad things were."

-Rebecca Munro, Ulva resident and buyout leader

"For me, personally, community is my experience of going to ceilidhs when I was growing up. Traditional music, just the craic with my friends, you know. . . . I'll go to the music session and it'll pop on a Thursday. . . . So community is for me when you get – when somebody is ill and the community kind of rallies around. It's the ability to walk down and straight and smile at the people that you know, that you nod and

say hello. You are kind of enveloped in something. And I know that's very special. But then when you take a community and then you have it in the landscape of somewhere like Assynt, again, that's very special. So, um, I would view the, *I would view the community as part of the landscape*, you know. I would say that the mountains definitely have personality for me, in my understanding. *To me it's like they're having a conversation.*"

- Assynt resident

Eigg holds. The island sorts. Areas tell. Mountains talk to each other. In the narratives, the land itself acts upon the people and the other actors on the landscape.

To dispel any confusion about what I am implying, the respondents telling me these things were not explicitly personifying the actions of these seemingly inert geological and archeological features. Some would use these phrases, then back up and say something like, "obviously the land is not actually talking to me," to clarify that they were not testifying to some kind of supernatural phenomenon. To make this abundantly clear, Galli, who had claimed that Eigg itself sorted people out, told me a story about the time he created a Facebook page for his dog, Bob. Bob subsequently gained thousands of "friends," and was popular enough to have people sending the dog "Dear Abby"-style questions. With a roll of his eyes, Galli asked, rhetorically, if these people didn't realize that as dog, Bob couldn't type. As the details of Galli's story make clear, he no more saw the physical matter of the island as capable of speaking audible, literal words as to who should live there than his dog could type advice for romance problems into a Facebook comment. Even the most religiously observant among buyout leaders, as Henneman and McIntosh (2009) found in their survey of land reform campaigners, deferred when offered the chance to put explicitly spiritual language onto community ownership.

A centerpiece of Bruno Latour's departure from modernist and postmodernist critique is a demand to take these linguistic constructions seriously. Latour refuses to either look past them as just so much metaphorical syntactic sugar or, even worse, to commit the modernist error of "belief in belief." This latter, typically gnomic construction from Latour, refers to a kind of mental or rhetorical move in which the researcher, being fully rational and hence not suffering from "belief," dismisses the views of the an informant as little more than naive belief. In the context of these pronouncements of land as a subject performing actions, something is happening ontologically. The people enacting community land ownership here consistently use sentences in which the land, the estates, or other non-humans do things. These non-human actors engage in activities which significantly shape community and its ability to execute land reform.

"So yes, the people are the land as much as the land are the people. You know it's the two of them are intertwined, that's a certainty."

- Angus McDowall, chair of Pairc Trust

In a clarifying turn, McDowall, along with the Assynt resident above, places the human population of the physical territory in a relationship so closely intertwined with the land itself that the two are effectively an identity. The population itself becomes part of the land; as such, if Eigg or the mountains or the North Assynt Estate are going to do something, "the land" is now no longer restricted to the local geology and botany, but includes the people. Ascribing personified verbs becomes considerably less mystical if the landscape now incorporates a human population as well. In McDowall's identity, if the land needs to speak, it has human mouths available with which to do so.

Yet, turning to the human population only solves a problem of speech physiology; it has not particularly informed which humans get to speak for the land, or how those humans

have any knowledge of what the land wants to say. Notably, the quotes above do not refer to a subsection of the population performing these actions, or even saying, "it's the love of each other that holds the people here together." The land is involved; it is not just the object of love. Among all of this, the amalgamation of land and people goes by another name: *community*.

Situating community in theory

The research to date into how Scottish community ownership works continues to have a community-shaped hole in its theoretical constructions. Multiple examinations of empirical data find that on aggregate, community-owned estates attract and retain more young adults with children, contributing to community vitality. Renewable energy generation on community-owned estates has far outpaced similar development on adjacent private estates. Community landlords are undertaking more projects of native woodland replanting, and have found innovative ways to harvest timber that may have otherwise stood until wind blew it over. However, similar research has also found persistent, troubling questions across trusts about which specific residents are empowered by community ownership. Trusts across many estates struggle to recruit certain portions of the population, and other trusts suffer repeated difficulties in bringing projects to successful completion. These studies often gesture in the direction of "community" to locate where the politics and difficulties may lie. To explain community land ownership, we must explain community.

The innovative concept of community developed by Stephen Gudeman and expanded on by J. K. Gibson-Graham centers around *commons*. Commons, or common property resources, here may be understood as resources which are managed by a group of

"appropriators" who control who has access to the resource, its management, and dispute resolutions around it. Because commons are often material and fixed artifacts or spaces, these central elements of community are more easily seen than mere amorphous interpersonal ties. Into the community-shaped hole in Scottish land ownership, we can place commons.

However, as the quotes from Maggie Fyffe and others which open this essay make clear, the land is not passive in these relations. After all, community in these narratives is not just holding, gluing, and speaking in comments in my interview data. Rather, community, via its ownership role through the trusts, is powerful enough to reverse negative trends on these estates, simultaneously, in a wide range of spheres of activity. Somewhere, community is deriving its power and decisiveness, and those involved in these trusts continually point back to the physical spaces they live in to explain it.

These questions of how collectives can form coherent speech acts, and how material, non-human entities may express their agency in shaping narratives are familiar ones to science and technology studies, or STS. Just as communities and land in Scotland appear to speak and act together, so STS has looked to explain how established and accepted facts of science can emerge from the pronouncement of a single researcher conducting a single experiment. To STS theorists, including Latour's actor-network theory (ANT), explanations of production of scientific fact must incorporate the human social arrangements around the people performing the research, but cannot be reducible to them. The innovation of ANT theorists such as Latour and Michel Callon was to treat the matters under investigation as having their own agency equal to that of the humans. The actor-networks produced by scientists, methods, equipment, and materials under study are thereby strong and

authoritative enough to have their collective speech acts become facts in the realm of "science."

In the account I have produced here, specific actors from the human population as well as portions of the land and built environment come together to form assemblages powerful enough to speak and to change the trajectories of rural estates. Specifically, I propose the *binding commons* as the central piece of community assembly. In addition to following parameters of common property regimes, as understood by scholars of the commons such as Elinor Ostrom, I draw on Susan Leigh Star's "boundary object" to examine how a commons can actively reshape the community around it. Star's boundary object is a non-human object which moves back and forth between disjunct groups, facilitating collaboration between them. In Star's articulation, the boundary object forms an "infrastructure" that spans the groups, facilitating the transfer of information and work to respond to needs.

Binding commons, on the other hand, produce a different kind of infrastructure, which I call *community infrastructure*. This infrastructure is produced by actions the commons perform, include binding (or in Fyffe's words, holding or gluing), sorting, and remaking the community around it. By these processes, community actively shapes the binding commons and *vice versa*. The community infrastructure produced transmits information, facilitates sharing of work, and helps bring local controversies to a resolution. In the ANT model, actor-networks of science and technology are able to produce usable scientific facts and technological artifacts. Similarly, then, community infrastructure, through these processes of information sharing and resolution of controversies, produces locally useful facts and artifacts in the constructed environment on the landscape.

This production of locally useful facts stands in contrast to the kinds of information and work that state and absentee private landlords produce locally. Private and state-managed estates in Scotland have been plagued by the kinds of problems documented by James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State*. Despite policies and plans organized on the rational examination of the best available information, the kind of knowledge Scott calls *metis* has remained unavailable to them. As such, trees get planted in bogs or in other areas where they can't be harvested, buildings are left to decay, promising enterprises falter from lack of attention, and younger residents leave for want of secure housing and economic opportunity. Under community ownership, by contrast, these critical pieces of information are not only available, but the local community infrastructure becomes strengthened through the expansion and intensification of binding commons. Trust ownership is now able to produce reliable, usable facts as well as physical infrastructure on the landscape.

Importantly though, a central actor such as the binding commons does not incorporate all members of the community. Equally, community infrastructure only amplifies and closes around the *metis* knowledge generated by the parts of the community that are well-attached and have standing to speak and be heard in the infrastructure. Community infrastructure, then, is no panacea, but simply a kind of local technological fix that still amplifies and reifies limited subsets of information and concerns. The structure of relations with which a community attaches to its binding commons will profoundly shape the knowledge that is produced. Echoing Latour's re-situation of scientific knowledge from absolute to useful knowledge, the local knowledge produced by community infrastructure is, at best, merely usable and partially validated.

In transgressing the divide between human and non-human actors on the landscape, however, the hybrid form of land and people, together as community, violates what Latour refers to as the "modernist constitution." Under this arrangement, which Latour seeks to disassemble, a hallmark of civilized, scientific society is a claim to total separation of human concerns from non-human ones. It is only primitive, unmodernized people, under this claim who fail to maintain this separation. Despite the near-constant reification of the Scottish highlands and islands as somehow untouched or empty, they are places which continue to bear the physical and social evidence of waves of modernization efforts. The ontological claims re-assembling the landscape and community into a unity and giving voice to aspects of the landscape is, in Latour's framework, a "non-modernist" move. Just as Latour claims, titularly, *We Have Never Been Modern*, the identity of the land and the people together as an assembly is a refusal to adopt the modernist conceit of a false separation. The state of being "non-modern," under Latour, implies a refusal to accept the claims of modern revolution as read, whether to celebrate or lament the erasure of the past, but to treat the terms of modernity as simply another period with its own history, processes, narratives, and material artifacts.

Colonialism, patriarchy, and the landscape

If Latour's modernist constitution underwrites Western modernism's colonial claims to superior rationality, is a non-modernist movement also a decolonizing movement? Multiple residents and leaders claimed to me in interviews that Scottish community land ownership is the work of a kind of Scottish post-colonialism. This narrative from an Assynt resident who went to college outside the UK noted how decolonial studies illuminated her own

personal experience. Beyond that, the themes she mentions here—erasure of local history, loss of native language, and a sense of sadness because of the alienation from those touchstones as an adult—will all be familiar to indigenous scholars and writers.

I didn't really understand my own history, and I didn't understand that— we weren't taught Scottish history at school. We weren't taught about the Clearances. I had to go somewhere else and listen to people from other countries talk about decolonial studies to actually realize that that—that's kind of what happens in here. And even though I experienced fragments of a Gaelic culture through music and the ceilidhing as a child—this was kind of on the tail-end of that. And so I couldn't express because I couldn't speak a language. I don't, I still don't speak Gaelic. I'm learning it.

They are not alone in this—both Assynt-based geographer Isobel MacPhail and Isle of Eigg Trust founding director Alistair MacIntosh explicitly claim the post-colonial mantle for Scottish land reform as well. MacPhail cautiously uses the language of coloniality to discuss a community which enjoys formal citizenship in a core nation of a primary force of global imperial colonialism. As she notes, to tread this ground risks appropriation of language intended to open emancipatory possibilities for those considerably more removed from power. As she expresses it:

[P]ost-colonial approaches have some usefulness and relevance in this context, but carry dangers too, which must be attended to at every stage. In particular it will be necessary to ensure that any claims to partial subalternity on the part ofcrofting communities does not render transparent their collusions in the violence of colonialism and Orientalism. It is therefore important to be alert to significant silences in these Gaidhealtachd, Highlands and Islands andcrofting discourses. . . . Post-colonial theory, within limits, is helpful in translating historical motivations for such action and in contextualising the aspirations of community groups. This is an endeavour fraught with difficulty, but Spivak's practical approach to theory should help to judge the efficacy of this approach:

"That's how you use theories. Ready to jettison them. You know what I mean?" (MacPhail 2002, p147)

Writer and actor Harry Josephine Giles illustrates this succinctly in their meditation on the ongoing project of an independent Scotland and the themes of colonialism in discourses around a possible separation from the United Kingdom. They write:

When I think about Scotland and coloniality, my first touchstone is always Renton in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*: we are 'colonised by wankers. [...] We're ruled by effete arseholes! What does that make us?' This picture of colonisation as the theft of masculine vigour — perpetrated by the feminine, the non-reproductive and the 'very ground zero of gayness' — is entirely of a piece with Mel Gibson's *Scotland* (and entire oeuvre), in which FREEEEEDOOOOOM is about freeing the pure vitality of the white heterosexual male from the emasculating and decadent compromises of the metropolitan empire.

These questions confound me, perhaps most of all because we lack a language to express Scotland's position anent coloniality. The expanding idea of 'postcolonialism', developed primarily in nations struggling for independence from European empires, doesn't seem to cut it,

Giles continues:

Are we, colonised and colonising, going to continue to look for fantasies of ourselves in other subalterns and other imperialists, or can we develop a language for a politics of our own? (Giles 2018)

As Giles helpfully clarifies, Scotland's halting movements towards decolonization collide with notions of masculine sexuality and vigor. And yet, as Tuck and Yang (2012) have insisted, decolonization is not a metaphor. If the Scottish community ownership movement is to have any legitimate claim to decolonization, it must be more than a "move to innocence" of citizens of what was once the foremost colonial power in the world. Scottish decolonization cannot just be metaphorical. The process of decolonization for the highlands must be more than a reach to attain status as *The Oppressed vis a vis* the Clearances or the decline of Gaelic, as important as these are.

Interventions from feminist geography, particularly those from J. K. Gibson-Graham and their community economies school of scholarship, give coloniality a specific spatial and material site. Coloniality, divorced from its totalizing status, arrives in these spaces through

specific networks and ties and manifests itself "on the ground." With this, colonialism and patriarchy are no longer simply intersecting tropes in this discourse, but deeply entangled ones. Scotland's concentrated, privatized, alienated land ownership, as Andy Wightman insists, is a direct product of both inheritance by a single male heir and the alienation of those heirs from the lands they inherit. This alienation is produced by requirements for them to be educated in, and hence see their interests denominated in, the capital. Likewise, the lodge or "big house" on rural estates testifies to a particular form of value appropriation from the heyday of the shooting estate. In the era of community land ownership, the content of these estates is actively, materially re-written, as the gardens which surrounded these houses are embraced while the "big houses" themselves are discarded as unmaintainable and undesirable.

While forms of resistance centered around land have earned hard-won gains, such as the irrevocable crofting tenure, the forms of production on crofts and in other rural areas continue to be subject to sways in national and international policy. Colonialism and modernity are then neither wholly absent in some kind of anachronistic, "untouched" landscape that exists for no other reason than to be "the view," nor are they omnipresent, all-consuming. Rather, they arrive in the contemporary highlands via an entangled network of arrangements whose forms are on aggregate are too numerous to account for, but which nonetheless arrive in specific, spatially constrained artifacts and actions.

Yet while decolonization is not metaphorical, many other indigenous scholars emphasize that the production of knowledge remains a site of potent coloniality (see Littletree *et al.* 2020). In other words, even if it is not metaphorical, it may involve some digging into metaphor. Gibson-Graham's spatially specific remedy for all-encompassing

coloniality and capitalism again becomes useful. In order to address knowledge production, the processes of knowledge production must also be removed from totalizing narratives. To use Donna Haraway's terminology, once these processes are situated, not just in the personhood of the actors in knowledge production but in place, so too does knowledge production drop out of the transcendent and "land on the ground."

While the language of decolonization and indigeneity will necessarily continue to sit awkwardly in the Scottish context, the residents in these spaces at least voice sentiments with echoes of the kinds of non-human relations that indigenous scholars continue to identify as central to indigenous identities and knowledge systems.

"Discovering, living, closer to other species, the, the, I, we, I feel the animals on this croft have as much right to this croft as I do, and so we're trying to live in partnership. . . . I'm a much happier person. I feel much calmer. I know who I am. I know, I know – I feel safe."

- Crofter on Eigg

Among the remaining Gaelic speakers in the highlands and islands, or *Ghàidhealtachd*, the term *dùthchas* describes the relationship between people and land. Sometimes directly translated as "origin" or "native place," many Gaelic scholars insist this falls far short of its connotation. Instead, they offer, "kindness from or of the land," "belonging to the land," or "in service to the land." Having no more Gaelic myself than the greeting, *Ciamar a tha thu*, I cannot speak authoritatively, but I imagine that "love of the land" might be close to the mark.

Policy implications

Beyond theory and politics, the results presented here provide some insights for Scotland's policies of land reform and rural development going forward. First, at a basic

level, the formal and informal ties between the human community and the landscape itself will profoundly shape the trajectory of a community owned estate. In developing potential community buyouts or asset transfers, these ties should be assessed early in order to inform plans for how estates or other properties will be managed. Additionally, these ties, and hence the trajectories that will be shaped by them, are mediated by the form and functioning of local community infrastructure. Places that have already developed strong community infrastructure around pre-existing binding commons will, by the results of this study, be more likely to bring projects to successful completion and to achieve organizational and financial stability. Conversely, places where community infrastructure is poorly developed may struggle to gain organizational stability. Likewise, places where community infrastructure is fractured may have difficulty consolidating local support for projects and for trust leadership.

This community infrastructure can be assessed by identifying and examining the local binding commons. The methods in this study provide a a framework for this sort of assessment, combining a modified community landscape inventory with resident interviews focused on places of importance and of common concern. These assessments must be sure to attend to absences, silences, and discontinuities which appear in the account, as they may indicate fractures or disruptions in community infrastructure. Based on the focal communities in this study, binding commons may develop around a range of elements on the landscape, but in rural Scotland the local store may frequently be found to exhibit the properties of a binding commons.

At a broader scale, this research largely confirms that community ownership continues to display remarkable efficacy as a form of land reform, as an economic development tool,

and as a means for managing rural land for critical policy goals. Specifically, it suggests that the power of community ownership emerges from the way in which it taps into and produces community infrastructure. Community landholding entities thereby integrate collective decision making arrangements with the broad rights inherent in land ownership. These arrangements may then on local knowledge mediated by the infrastructure around binding commons. At the same time, the collective management and planning of community land acts as its own binding commons, which in turn helps develop and strengthen community ownership.

Directions for research

I foresee further research emerging from this work along three general lines. First, I would like to continue to develop the actor-network cultural landscape inventory in two specific ways. While the deployment here was largely successful at producing valuable results, I encountered multiple issues around data technology and site focus and strategy. My next steps along these lines would be to consult with other cultural landscape inventory practitioners who are wrestling with similar issues and attempt to develop a more generalized set of techniques for site selection. Relatedly, the collection, analysis, and presentation of CLI data in this study was frustratingly fractured. I was unable to find existing software packages which could simultaneously collect all of the forms of data that I had hoped to be able to collect. For instance, I was unable to collect audio data and moving GPS coordinates simultaneously, and had to use separate applications to collect each form of data and then "stitch" them back together afterwards. These problems should be solvable with some substantial software development effort, which could allow for a more

specialized interface suiting the methods and also facilitate analysis and visualization of the data collected.

Second, I aim to see how the models of community dynamics developed here apply outside of this study site. The integrated model of landscape and community, binding commons, and community infrastructure was developed specifically in respect to rural Scottish community land ownership. However, it is my hope that they are functional, possibly with revision and local attenuation, beyond this study site and may inform dynamics of community and ownership beyond the Scottish Highlands and Islands. In particular, I am interested in the role of commons in the production of knowledge and local facts. In the last year of writing this dissertation, the role of misinformation and the dissemination of facts have emerged as critical issues. In the correct environment, I would be interested to apply the model of constructed environment, community, and commons developed here to explore how misinformation is produced and how it can be countered.

Finally, the Scottish experiment in community ownership continues to accelerate. This study focused in particular on the earliest community buyouts and on later buyouts that occurred in similar areas and in similar circumstances. However, since the passage of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, the legal and funding tools developed for rural Scotland have now been made available across the country, resulting in multiple urban buyouts. The specific field sites where buyouts and asset transfers continue to place more land and property into community ownership. As such, there are an ever increasing number of cases to draw upon where more and broader field work remains needed, including validating and expanding the findings in this work.

Visible community, speaking landscape

In the language of sales brochures which advertise rural Scottish estates to the global real estate market, the land continues to be a place of insular anachronism. Words such as "untouched," "pristine," and "wild" continue to appear in brochures just as they did in 1992 for the then North Lochinver Estate. The 2017 sales brochure for the island of Ulva detailed its 123 different bird species and the cetaceans that appear off its shores, but neglected to mention the 5 people still living there. As in the 1992 brochure, what is advertised about the land for sale is its views and the sights to see. The landscape or "the view," like children in the old adage, is to be seen, not heard from.

Conversely, in the period immediately after the Ulva sales brochure was published, a potential buyer came to the island and was, as one resident told me, quite upset to find people still living there, as the brochure had neglected to mention them. The former owner's website for the island had, however, included mention of "Sheila's cottage," a partially restored stone and thatch "black house" near the ferry pier, with its interpretive texts remembering the kind old woman who had lived there for decades and how she lived. Community, then, is allowed to speak its history, but is not to be seen.

By instead viewing these spaces through the lens of the binding commons, the landscape, rather than being mute, may now speak through the community infrastructure it is part of and which it helps produce. Similarly, with the transition to community land ownership, community infrastructure facilitates the collective work to produce new artifacts on the landscape, including new binding commons. As such, active community, rather than hiding in a vaporous or amorphous form of social relations, takes a material form on the land. Appreciation of the visible landscape can move out of the passive, simplified "view"

and into an expression of a fuller collective existence. Community is no longer merely a "fuzzy warmness," but a powerful force capable of producing facts, setting the terms of inclusion and exclusion, and transforming local outcomes.

I began this dissertation with the story of the surprises of palm trees on wind-chilled Scottish slopes and community groups pointing to the importance of the toilets. With the fully developed lens of the binding commons, the toilets are not merely an off-color wisecrack. Instead, they become an grounded expression of community recognition of basic human needs and the deployment of labor of maintenance of the physical infrastructure to care for them. The palm trees are not just geographic oddities or even mere relics of imperial wealth producing elite spaces of expression. Instead, they have been adopted—included, even—in the landscape, in the community, of these gardens. The landscape, including the palm trees, speaks. Community is visible.

Appendix A: Research Materials

This appendix holds a catalog of materials deployed in this research, including recruitment documents, coding sheets, and interview schedules.

Analysis of Public Consultation

Coding Sheet

In reconsidering the methodology for approaching the texts, I focused on considering three general issues of content. First, I coded whether connotatively each response generally supported, opposed, or was mixed, unsure, or unclear about the land reform proposals. Second, I looked for certain categories of objectives, outcomes, and values valorized in the consultation responses. The categories of objectives I coded for are as follows:

- **Community/social cohesion:** Concerns with bringing people together and developing ties between people. Does not include simple expressions of concern, such as “fragile communities.”
- **Economic Growth:** Including economic development, investment, and bringing new revenues into the areas of concern.
- **Employment:** Including any concern with jobs, unemployment, or work.
- **Ending out-migration:** Also including concerns with an aging or declining population.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Any concern with nature, climate, biodiversity, plant life, endangered species, and natural landscapes.
- **Heritage/History:** Concerns with upsetting long standing relationships, historical significance of arrangements, and preserving indigenous natural areas.
- **Sustainability:** Beyond just calls for environmental protection, this only included texts which actively valorized long-term arrangements beneficial to both environmental and economic concerns.

Finally, I specifically examined responses to Question 22 on the land consultation, which followed up on the agreement query, “Do you think a trustee of a charity should be required to engage with the local community before taking a decision on the management, use or transfer of land under the charity’s control?” by asking “How should “community” be defined?” Importantly, this asks for more than just a general definition of community, but places it specifically in the context of a category of parties which might be given a specific right of consultation in certain cases. The coding sheet included the following categories and attributes of parties to be considered part of the “community” to be consulted:

- **Business/economic activity:** Ownership of a business in, an economic connection to the place, or employment in the given locality.
- **Interests:** Broadly aligning with the LRRG report's “communities of interest.”
- **Historical:** Kinship, ancestral, or other historical ties to the land.
- **Land Management:** Whether being the responsible party for managing land in the area of concern qualifies as criteria for inclusion.
- **Local:** While “local” is included in the opening question, this code simply indicates whether the respondent reiterated locality or the specific area of concern.
- **Open/Broad:** Responses that generally called for a generally open and more inclusive definition of community.
- **Other non-geographic:** Any criteria for inclusion in community not defined in another code and which did not rely on a specific geographic framework.

- **Private land ownership:** Whether owning land in the area of concern qualifies for inclusion in community, even if the owner resides elsewhere.
- **Residence:** Whether living in the area of concern qualifies for inclusion in community.
- **Use:** Whether various users of the land in question should be included in community.

Data Extraction and Processing

In order to ensure variability in the responses and to ensure that my sample captured both supporters and opponents of land reform, I created three subpopulations of responses and randomly sampled within those. Using the text processing and scripting language Perl I coded small scripts to collect a full list of available responses from the online repository and download them one-by-one. With these in hand, I wrote an additional script to parse the HTML files and extract the values selected for the set of all questions of the form, “Do you agree . . .” I selected the following five questions to create a rough score of agreement with the principles of land reform along the aspects most relevant to community and regional improvement:

- Do you agree that the Scottish Government should have a stated Land Rights and Responsibilities Policy?
- Do you agree that there should be powers given to Scottish Ministers or another public body to direct private landowners to take action to overcome barriers to sustainable development in an area?
- Do you agree that public sector bodies, such as Forestry Commission Scotland, should be able to engage in a wider range of management activities in order to promote a more integrated range of social, economic and environmental outcomes?

- Do you think a trustee of a charity should be required to engage with the local community before taking a decision on the management, use or transfer of land under the charity's control?
- Should there be a new legal definition of common good?

I calculated a total "percent agreement" score by dividing the total number of "yes" scores by the combined number of "yes" and "no" scores. (Thereby excluding questions with no answer from impacting the score.) This divided the set into responses that answered broadly in agreement (628 responses), responses broadly in opposition (157 responses), and those that did not answer the "Do you agree . . ." questions at all or answered outside of the online form (291 responses). From these sets, I randomly selected 30 from the support set, 30 from the opposition set, and 20 from the unanswered set. I then coded those 80 responses by the above procedure. From that selection, two responses were discovered to be duplicates of others already coded so were eliminated. Three others were almost entirely blank except for questions which were not including in the analysis.

Interview Data

Recruitment Script for Phone and Email

Except as otherwise noted, the following text will be used for both phone and email recruitment.

[If contacting by phone, salutation will not be included]

Dear <name of potential interviewee>,

My name is Michael Bacon, and I am contacting you regarding your role in land reform and community land ownership in Scotland. I am conducting academic research on multiple aspects of land reform and land ownership as part of a dissertation with the University of Virginia in the United States, and would like to interview you on the subject. I will be /am in Scotland over the summer and would like to schedule an in-person interview. If an in-person interview is not possible, I would still be interested in talking to you via telephone or internet video call.

[If contacting by email]

If you would be willing to be interviewed, please respond and I will be happy to provide more details, answer any questions regarding the study, and schedule a meeting.

Kind regards,
Michael Bacon
Constructed Environment Ph.D. Student
University of Virginia
UVA IRB Study 2016-####-##

[If contacting by phone]

If you are interested in participating, I can either provide further details, answer any questions, and potentially schedule a meeting now, or I can contact you via phone or email later, at your preference.

Recruitment Outline for In-Person Recruitment

Because of the snowball sampling technique involved, some persons will be recruited in person. In these cases, the following points of information will be conveyed as soon as the decision is made that the person in question is a potential recruit for the study.

- My name is Michael Bacon
- I am conducting academic research on multiple aspects of land reform and land ownership
- This is part of a dissertation with the University of Virginia in the United States
- If you are willing I would like to interview you on the subject, possibly while traveling around the estate.
- This interview will be recorded, including with location data

The interviewee will then be presented with a copy of the consent form, which contains the critical details on the study, as soon as is possible. No data will be collected before obtaining written consent.

Supplemental Oral Consent Script for Remote Telephone or Video Interviews

Some interviewees will be difficult to reach in person. In such a case, I will email copies of the consent form and then read this script at the beginning of the recording. The interviewee's responses will be recorded. If I do not obtain consent, I will stop recording and delete the audio file immediately.

As you know, I am a planning researcher from the University of Virginia, in the United States. First of all, have you seen and read the consent form that I sent you?

Let me briefly just go over the gist of it. I am conducting a study on Scottish community land ownership, and I would like to ask you some questions about that. I would like to tape record our conversation, so that I can get your words accurately. If at any time during our talk you feel uncomfortable answering a question please let me know, and you don't have to answer it. Or, if you want to answer a question but do not want it tape recorded, please let me know and I will turn off the machine. If at any time you want to withdraw from this study please tell me and I will erase the tape of our conversation. Now I would like to ask you if you agree to participate in this study, and to talk to me about Scottish community land ownership. Do you agree to participate, and to allow me to tape record our conversation?

Finally, you have the option of me using your real name in the study, or I can use a pseudonym. If you want to use a pseudonym, I will do everything I can to protect your privacy, but there is always a slight chance that someone could find out about our conversation. Do you agree to let me publish quotes from you using your real name?

General Interview Questions

The format for these interviews is a semi-structured interview. These questions will be asked, along with follow-up questions regarding the same subjects addressed depending on the responses of the interviewees. Some questions for specific roles are noted below. Additionally, because almost all interviewees will have some public connection to or position on land reform, additional individualized questions about their public role will be necessary.

All Interviewees

What specifically defines the community you live in?

Are there any people you would identify as part of the community who aren't residents?

What places are part of the community?

What are the most important places on the trust-owned estate?

What buildings or built facilities are the most important?

What are the key projects that the trust has undertaken?

Who is in charge of those / that project(s)?

What should be the ultimate goals of a community buyout?

What is the least a community trust needs to accomplish in order to call itself a success?

Do you feel that ownership is an important issue in land reform?

Do you feel like you're personally connected to this community?

What parts of the community would you say you're most strongly connected to?

Has that changed at all since the buyout happened?

What do you think the biggest changes are that are the result of the buyout happening?

Do you think about the land in the estate differently now that the buyout has happened?

What needs in the community do you think the trust needs to be addressing?

I'm going to ask you about a few contentious issues that have been in the news lately in the highlands and islands. If you don't feel comfortable answering, please let me know and we can skip these.

The European Nature Trust has proposed a "re-wilding" initiative to re-introduce "wild" species in parts of Scotland. Community Land Scotland has opposed this proposal. Do you have thoughts on this proposal? Do you have any further thoughts on "empty" land or the idea of "wilderness" in Scotland?

For residents

What can you tell me about the school(s) in this community? How do you think the buyout has changed them?

How about the post office here? Is it still open? Do you worry about it closing? What effect would that have?

Tell me about the role of the shop(s) here. <reference by name if possible> How much does it meet the needs of the community? Is there anything that's missing or that you think could be done better?

What NHS services are available in the community? Has the transition to trust ownership changed that at all?

What legal arrangement or tenure do you have on your residence here on the trust? Do you have any concerns about that tenure security? Has that changed at all since the buyout happened?

For trust leaders/activists

What role have you personally played in the process of creating community land trusts, and in the greater issue of land reform in Scotland?

What has motivated you to take on this work?

What parties other than the residents of the estate work with the trust in some capacity?

How does that interaction work? Is it helpful to have them involved? Does it bring up challenges?

Tell me a little about your relationship with other trust leaders or board members. Are you close to any of them? Has being involved in the trust changed those relationships?

I hear often that buyouts and community ownership are a lot of work. Has this been your experience? Whom does this work primarily fall to?

For teachers/shop owners/workers/health care workers

What role does your <institution> play here in the community?

What are the challenges in operating here?

What brings you personally to this place in particular?

Do you have any interactions with the trust? What shapes those relationships?

Does community ownership change the way your institution operates at all? Are there things it makes easier? Harder?

For land managers (farmers/livestock workers/crofters)

Tell me about the land you specifically manage

What are your primary duties related to managing that land? Tell me about what your work there looks like.

Do you use any common grazings at all? Any other common land?

Who else is involved in those spaces?

What are your primary concerns dealing with that land?

Has being on trust-owned land changed this at all?

For national leaders

My work engages with four specific trusts. I'd like to go over each of them and talk about your impressions of them.

What is your impression on how <trust> is progressing?

What challenges do they face? What successes have they had? What failures?

Have you had a specific role in <trust>?

What do you think the role of an outside actor such as yourself should be in supporting such a locally-focused endeavor?

How has your personal relationship to that space or community changed through community ownership? That of your institution?

Oral Consent Script

As you know, I am a geography and planning researcher from the University of Virginia, **in the United States**. I am conducting a study on community land ownership in Scotland, and I would like to ask you some questions about that. I would like to **record** our conversation using digital audio, so that I can get your words accurately. If at any time during our talk you feel uncomfortable answering a question please let me know, and you don't have to answer it. Or, if you want to answer a question but do not want it tape recorded, please let me know and I will turn off the machine. If at any time you want to withdraw from this study please tell me and I will erase the tape of our conversation. I will do everything I can to protect your privacy, but there is always a slight chance that someone could find out about our conversation. I will send you a form that documents all of the details with information on how to contact the university via [email/postal mail]. Now I would like to ask you if you agree to participate in this study, and to talk to me about community land ownership [and the community you live in]. Do you agree to participate, and to allow me to **record** our conversation?

IRB Consent Form

Informed Consent Agreement

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: This is an integrative study of the role of community land ownership as an alternative economic institution of ownership in contemporary Scotland.

What you will do in the study: The study will combine interviews, walking interviews, satellite images, ground maps, government-produced data, public archives, and other available data sources to document how community ownership impacts estates. Interviews will be recorded via audio. If the interview happens while walking or driving, the locations along route taken during the interview will be stored and mapped as well.

Time required: The study will require about 1 hour of your time and will consist of a recorded interview.

Risks: Unless requested otherwise, quotes from this interview may be published in academic journal articles with names attached. If anonymity is requested, a pseudonym for the quotes may be used.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us understand the economic, environmental, and political impacts of community land ownership.

Confidentiality: Because of the nature of the data, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential and it may be possible that others will know what you have reported. Your real name will be used with any quotes **only** if you explicitly grant permission below; otherwise, a pseudonym will be used.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all recordings and transcripts of this interview will be destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like to

withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Michael Bacon at 00-1-919-225-9846 or mtb7aj@virginia.edu, or at the below address.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:

Michael T. Bacon
Urban and Environmental Planning
Campbell Hall
P.O. Box 400122
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4122
mtb7aj@virginia.edu
001 919 225 9846

Dr. Ellen Bassett
Urban and Environmental Planning
Campbell Hall
P.O. Box 400122
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4122
emb7d@virginia.edu
001 434 924 6461

If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact:

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Agreement:

I agree to allow my real name to be published with quotes from this interview. *This is entirely optional.*

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

IRB Protocol Form

Protocol Form

Using this document:

- The purpose of this document is to provide you with a guide for providing the information that the IRB-SBS needs in order to review your protocol. Each question provides instructions as well as suggestions for completing the question. After every **Instruction** section, there is a **Response** area; please provide your answer in **Response** area.
- In addition, any blue underlined text is linked to related areas in our [Researcher's Guide](#) on our [website](#). If you have questions about how to respond to a question, start with the Researcher's Guide and then [contact](#) our office for additional help.

Submitting a protocol:

- This document has three parts: **Section A "Investigator's Agreement," Section B "Protocol Information,"** and **Section C "Description of the Research Study."** To submit a protocol, complete this document and email it and any accompanying materials (i.e. consent forms, recruitment materials, instruments) to irbsbs@virginia.edu. For more information on what to submit and how, please see [Submitting a Protocol](#).
- **Please note that we can only accept forms in Microsoft Word format and in this form only. Do not submit your responses in a separate document.** We do not accept hand-written documents (with the exception of the signature on the Investigator's Agreement). Please submit the electronic form in its entirety; do not remove the signature pages from the document even though you will submit these pages as a pdf/hard copy. Do not alter this form; simply provide your responses in the **Response** area. **Forms that are not completed correctly will be returned to you and you will be required to complete them correctly before they are accepted. No exceptions!** If you need help using our form, please [contact](#) our office. For tips and suggestions for completing the protocol, please see [Protocol and Informed Consent Tips](#).
- **Section A "Investigator's Agreement"** must also be submitted with signatures. Signed materials can be submitted by mail, fax (434-924-1992), or email (scanned document to irbsbs@virginia.edu). Signed materials can also be submitted [in person to our office](#).
- In order to not delay your review, make sure that you (and any researcher listed on the protocol) have completed the [CITI training](#) in human subjects research.
- You will be contacted in 3-7 business days regarding your submission (depending on the protocol queue). Please see [Protocol Review Process](#) for more information.

A. Investigator Agreement

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE INVESTIGATOR AGREES:

1. That **no participants will be recruited** or data accessed under the protocol **until** the Investigator has received the **final approval or exemption letter** signed by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-SBS) or designee.
2. That **no participants will be recruited** or entered under the protocol **until** all researchers for the project including the Faculty Advisor have completed their **human investigation educational requirement** ([CITI training](#) is required every 3 years for UVA researchers).
3. That any **modifications of the protocol or consent form** will not be implemented without prior **written approval** from the IRB-SBS Chair or designee except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the participants.
4. That any **deviation from the protocol and/or consent form** that are serious, unexpected and related to the study or a **death** occurring during the study **will be reported promptly to the SBS Review Board** in writing.
5. That all protocol forms for **continuations of this protocol** will be **completed** and returned **within the time limit stated** on the renewal notification letter.
6. That **all participants will be recruited and consented as stated in the protocol approved or exempted** by the IRB-SBS board. If written consent is required, all participants will be consented by signing a copy of the consent form that has a non-expired IRB approval stamp.
7. That the IRB-SBS office will be notified within **30 days** of a **change in the Principal Investigator** for the study.
8. That the IRB-SBS office will be notified when **the active study is complete**.

Michael T. Bacon	16 April 2018
Principal Investigator (print)	Date
A Preliminary Study of Community Land Ownership in Scotland	
Protocol Title	Protocol Number (SBS office only)

Principal Investigator's Signature

FOR STUDENT AND STAFF PROPOSALS ONLY

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE FACULTY ADVISOR HAS READ THE PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH AND AGREES:

1. To **assume overall responsibility** for the conduct of this research and investigator.
2. To **work with the investigator**, and with the SBS Review Board, as needed, in **maintaining compliance with this agreement**.
3. That the **Principal Investigator is qualified to perform this study**.

Ellen Bassett	28 April 2018
Faculty Advisor (print)	Date

Faculty Advisor's Signature

The SBS Review Board reserves the right to terminate this study at any time if, in its opinion, (1) the risks of further experimentation are prohibitive, or (2) the above agreement is breached.

Protocol Form

B. Protocol Information

IRB-SBS Protocol Number (assigned by SBS office, leave blank):

IRB-SBS Grant Approval number: (If you received a Grant Approval prior to submitting a protocol, please include the number issued by our office. If you did not submit a Grant Approval Form, please leave this line blank.)

Submission Type (delete all those that don't apply):

New Protocol

Protocol Title:

Integrative Analysis of Scottish Community Land Ownership

Principal Investigator:

Michael T. Bacon

Professional Title:

Ph.D. Student

School (Curry, Medical, Arts & Sciences, etc):

Architecture

Department (CISE, Family Medicine, Psychology, etc):

Urban and Environmental Planning

Campus Box number:

400122

Mailing Address (only if campus box number is not available):

Telephone:

919-225-9846

UVA e mail address (no aliases, please):
Your computing ID is used for tracking your IRB CITI training.

mtb7aj@virginia.edu

Preferred e-mail address for correspondence (if applicable):

mtb7aj@virginia.edu

You are (delete all those that don't apply):

Graduate Student

This research is for (delete all those that don't apply):

Doctoral Dissertation

Primary contact for the protocol (if other than the principal investigator):

Contact's Email:

Contact's Phone:

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Ellen Bassett



School (Curry, Medical, Arts & Sciences, etc): Architecture

Department (CISE, Family Medicine, Psychology, etc): Urban and Environmental Planning

Campus Box number: 400122

Telephone: 434-924-6461

UVA e mail address (no aliases, please):
Your computing ID is used for tracking on-line human subjects training.
emb7d@virginia.edu

Other Researchers*:

Please list all other researchers in this study that are associated with UVA.* Please provide the following information for each researcher: Name, UVA email address (no aliases, please.)

Please list all other researchers not associated with UVA.* Please provide the following information for each researcher: Name, Institution, Phone Number, Mailing Address, Email Address.

Funding Source: If research is funded, please provide the following:

Name of the funding source (NIH, NFS, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, etc)

Type of funding source (delete all that don't apply):

Describe the funding source (optional unless you selected "sub contract" above)

funding period (month/year):

grant number:

Not funded

Paying Participants: If you are paying participants using State or UVA funds (including grants), you are required to complete the **UVA or State Funds Study Payment Procedures Form**. (Please describe your payment process in question 3-b in the next section.) **Please mark an "x" in the appropriate box (to the right):**

I am paying participants using State or UVA funds (including grants) and will include the UVA or State Funds Study Payment Procedures Form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not paying participants or I am not using State or UVA funds (including grants).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Anticipated start date for collecting
and analyzing data:**

1 June 2018

**Anticipated completion date for
collecting and analyzing data:**

1 June 2019

* Please only list researchers that are working directly with human subjects and/or their data. All researchers listed on the protocol must complete the IRB-SBS Training or provide proof of completing IRB training at their institution. If you have any questions about whether a researcher should be listed on the protocol or if a researcher has completed training, please contact our office (irbsbshelp@virginia.edu). Proof of training can be submitted to our office via fax (434-924-1992), by mail (PO Box 800392 Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392) or by email (irbsbs@virginia.edu).

C. Description of the Research Study

1. **Study Overview:** Give a brief overview of your project. Consider the following when framing your response:

- What is your purpose in conducting this research? What makes the project interesting and worth doing?
- Include information about the study's logistics (where and when it will be conducted, what instruments you will use, etc). What will you be asking participants to do, and what do you hope to learn from these activities?
- If your study has more than one phase, please clearly map out the different phases.
- If your study is a multi-site study, please describe.

Response 1: (enter response below this header)

This study's goal is to better understand the emergent forms of community land ownership in Scotland and their role in promoting economic development in rural areas. The study involves a range of mixed methods, only one component of which involves direct human subject research. This will be recorded and transcribed interviews with public activists, legislators, administrators, landowners, residents, trust leaders, and other figures who agree to participate in the study.

Interviews will be collected during field work in Scotland in summer 2018 and possibly a return trip within the following year, largely in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and in rural areas on and around the community estates themselves. The interviews will be recorded using digital equipment, then later transcribed and analyzed using qualitative techniques. Interviewees will be given the opportunity to request the use of a pseudonym in publication. Some interviews will be recorded during walking or driving trips with geospatial location information for further correlation and mapping.

If interviewees are not available for in-person interviews, interviews may be conducted by telephone or via online video links such as Skype or Google Hangouts.

These interviews will be used to help understand the connections between political structures, economic activities on the estates, and physical changes to the landscape.

Additionally, this study will involve the collection of publicly available but difficult to access archival data. These data will be largely public archives held by community land trusts in their individual archives. These data will be scanned using a document camera and analyzed using standard qualitative techniques. As few ethical issues are expected surrounding public data, the rest of this submission deals with interview data only.

2. **Participants: Please describe as best you can the population(s) you plan to work with.** Please describe them in the terms that are most pertinent to your project. We need to understand how working with them will further your research objectives and what steps need to be taken in order to minimize risk to them. **Please respond to questions a-e in this section.**
- Please fill in the following blanks below. If you are working with more than one population, please provide information for each group.

Response 2-a: (enter response below this header)

Age: 18 and older
Gender: No prescribed category.
Race: No prescribed category.
Estimated number of participants: 30-40

- Describe how participants will be identified and selected to participate in the study. Are there specific populations that you will be targeting and if so, why? Are there potential participants that you will exclude from the study and if so, why?

Response 2-b: (enter response below this header)

Interviews will be requested from a wide range of individuals, including residents of community land trusts, residents of nearby areas, trust leaders, business owners, workers, activists, members of parliament, owners of large estates, former owners, and other civic leaders.

- Is the population and/or individual participant “[risk-sensitive](#)”? (You will have an opportunity to discuss the risks in more detail in the “Risks” section.) Is the population and/or individual participant “[vulnerable](#)”? (This issue relates to the participant’s capacity consent; you will have an opportunity to discuss your consent procedures in more detail in the “Consents” section.)

Response 2-c: (enter response below this header)

The population is not risk-sensitive or vulnerable.

- Will you deceive and/or withhold information from the participants about the study? If so, please justify why deception and/or withholding information from the participants is necessary and describe the deception. Using deception requires specific consent forms and processes; please describe this process in the **Consent section** under **Response 3-a** and **3-b**.

Response 2-d: (enter response below this header)

No deception will be used in the study.

- What special experience or knowledge do you have that will allow you to work productively and respectfully with your participants? What special experience or knowledge does your faculty sponsor have in relation to your research participants?

Response 2-e: (enter response below this header)

The faculty advisor on this study, Dr. Ellen Bassett, has been principal investigator on multiple studies which rely heavily on interview data. The principal investigator on this study, Michael Bacon, has taken coursework in qualitative research from the UVA Sociology department.

3. **Consent:** [Consent](#) is an on-going process that starts when you first inform your participant about the study through your recruitment/advertising efforts and ends when the participant's data are no longer needed. The federal regulations require a [formal consent process](#) takes place where you provide participants with specific information about the study (usually provided in the consent form, see General Consent Template) and the participants are required to sign the form. Not [every study will fit this](#) mold and there are some [alternative methods](#) for conducting the formal consent procedure. **In general, the Board needs to understand how participants will be recruited and consented to participate in the study.** Please note that if your study qualifies for [exemption](#), you will not be required to follow the federal regulations for consent, but the Board may require that you provide information about the study to the participant. **Please respond to questions a-d in this section.**
- a. How will you [approach/recruit](#) participants to participate in your research? **Please provide all materials used to contact participants in this study. These materials could include letters, emails, flyers, advertisements, etc. If you will contact participants verbally, please provide a script that outlines what you will say to participants.**

Response 3-a: (enter response below this header)

Participants will be either be contacted directly via email or phone or recruited in person. Participants will be selected as known figures with public influence on land reform and community land ownership in Scotland. Additionally, some participants may be selected on the recommendation of other participants, provided the recommended participants are also known figures with public influence on opinion and policy.

- b. What is your [consent process](#)? Who will present the consent information and how will it be presented? How will you [document consent](#)? Are your participants able to sign a form, and if not, how will you document consent? Will you use more than one form (if you use more than one version of the consent form, **each form needs to have a unique title in order for our staff to keep track of the different forms**)? When and where will participants receive the consent form? Who will give them the consent form? Will you pay participants?

Response 3-b: (enter response below this header)

One printed form, the attached Informed Consent Agreement, will be used. The form will be presented to the interviewee at the time of the interview, before the recorded portion begins.

- c. Are any of your participants [unable to consent](#) (i.e. vulnerable population)? These populations include (but are not limited to): minors (participants under the legal age of consent), prisoners, and participants with diminished mental capacity. These participants generally need a parent (or surrogate) consent form and a participant assent form (prisoners being the likely exception unless they are minors too).

Response 3-c: (enter response below this header)

Only participants who are able to consent will be included.

- d. What is your [relationship](#) to your participants? Do you know them personally or hold any position of authority over them? Do any of the researchers (including the faculty advisor) have positions of authority over the participants, such as grading authority, professional authority, etc.? Are there any relevant financial relationships?

Response 3-d: (enter response below this header)

I have no personal or institutional relationship to the participants.

4. **Materials/Data collected:** For most SBS studies, the risk to participants often lies in the information that is collected from them. Thus the manner in which the data are collected, how they are stored, and how the data are reported in your research is an important part of determining the risk to participants. When you develop your procedures, consider **minimizing or eliminating the collection of identifying information** where possible and **provide justification** as to why it needs to be collected. **Please respond to questions a-d in this section.**

- a. Are any of the [data already collected](#)? (If you are only using archival data, please use the Archival Data protocol form instead of this form.) Are the data [publicly available](#) or part of a [private collection](#)? Please describe the data set(s) and provide a list of data fields you will use (when applicable). What will you do to protect the [confidentiality](#) of the pre-existing data?

Response 4-a: (enter response below this header)

None of the data are already collected.

- b. What will you do to protect the [privacy](#) of your participants? Describe the [process for collecting data](#) from your participants. What will you do to protect the [confidentiality](#) of your participants? Describe the kinds of information you will gather and the material forms it will take. Describe the level to which the participant's identity will be known, if that information will be collected (and why), and how the [identifying information](#) will be linked with the participant's data. If you don't intend to collect identifying information, describe your process for keeping the data anonymous.

Response 4-b: (enter response below this header)

Many participants are public figures or are residents in small communities, so may be identifiable by secondary role. I can provide pseudonymity in publications but cannot provide confidentiality because of the small populations involved.

- c. Will you use audio recordings, photographs, video recordings or other similar [data recording devices](#)? Please justify why it is necessary to use these devices, how you will use them, and what you will do with the data after they are collected.

Response 4-c: (enter response below this header)

Interviews will be recorded using a standard tablet with GPS tracking. After transcription, the audio of those recordings will be destroyed.

- d. How will your materials be [stored](#)? Discuss both how you plan to store it while you are collecting and actively analyzing it, and your [long-term plan](#) for maintaining it when the active research phase is finished. How will your data be reported in your study? Will you report the results in aggregate or will individual data be discussed?

Response 4-d: (enter response below this header)

Audio data will be stored on standard electronic media until transcription. Transcriptions will be stored as standard text files and archived on University of Virginia electronic storage. Coordinates for walking interviews will be stored in GIS format on University of Virginia electronic storage.

5. **Risks:** Almost any intervention into other people's lives carries with it the potential to cause them social, psychological, physical, or legal harm. However, not every interaction will put a participant at risk beyond what

is considered **minimal**. Please describe to the Board the potential risks and the probability of harm to the participants in your study. In this section, consider the following when framing your response:

- [Describe the risks](#) to the participants in your study. Does your study include “risk-sensitive” participants (as identified in the Participants section)? What is the probability that harm could occur?
- Describe what you will do to [minimize those risks](#). Describe what you will do if a [harmful situation occurs](#).
- Would a loss of [confidentiality](#) of any of your materials put participants at risk? If so, how will you prevent this from happening?

Response 5: (enter response below this header)

Because many of the participants are public officials or otherwise public individuals, published statements from them could have a negative impact on their careers. For this reason, participants will be offered the option of published pseudonymity. Participants are advised in the consent statement that there is no guarantee of confidentiality and that all recorded comments may be published.

6. **Benefits:** Benefits help to outweigh the risks to the participants, though not every study will have direct benefits to the participants. In this section, consider the following when framing your response:
- Will there be any benefits to the participants in your study? If so, what are they?
 - What is the general importance of the knowledge you expect to gain?

Response 6: (enter response below this header)

There are no direct benefits to the participants. As most participants have a direct interest in Scottish land reform, the production of knowledge about community land ownership may be of ancillary benefit to them.

Code sheet

The following code sheet was developed through a recursive coding process, using a custom-written web and database application (using the Django framework) to assist with doing qualitative and geospatial coding simultaneously. The geospatial codes were ultimately largely unused in the full analysis. These codes were first seeded by a selection of training text pulled from a range of interviews. The initial batch of codes were used to extract a set of very long quotes that met high level coding criteria. These long quotes were then coded for sub-quotes on finer grained codes. In order to get a full sweep, some sections of text were repeatedly re-coded to check for occurrences of codes in previously coded data.

This coding run largely resulted in the analyses and development of the model in Chapter 5. The coding of quotes and application of the model in Chapter 6 was more informal due to the wide-ranging nature of the quotes there.

community

community - affect

community - belonging

community - definition

community - definition - administrative

community - definition - common

community - definition - multiplicity

community - definition - non-resident

community - definition - personal relationships

community - definition - place names

community - definition - region

community - definition - resident

community - definition - restricted to village or township

community - definition - unknowable or fragile

community - local

community ownership

community ownership - leadership

community ownership - leadership - negative

community - ties

community - ties - bar

community - ties - crofting

community - ties - family or marriage

community - ties - field club

community - ties - in it together

community - ties - landscape

community - ties - local workers

community - ties - music

community - ties - school

community - ties - shared ideals

community - ties - shop

community - ties - vacation

community - transition

community - volunteer labor

fact production - disputes

importance

importance - beaches

importance - church

importance - cleared areas

importance - community hall

importance - forests
importance - meeting places
importance - schools
importance - shops
importance - toilets
importance - water
labor - motivation
labor - unpaid
origin
origin - native
origin - native - self
origin - non-native
origin - non-native - inclusive
silences

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