The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This study evaluates the role of community-based organisations, such as social clubs, places of worship and schools, in promoting sustainability practices among participants. Existing evidence that such initiatives could change participants’ practices was rather limited, as was the understanding of the relationship between community and sustainability. Using a methodology from social policy (realistic evaluation) the research consisted of a broadly qualitative exploration of five diverse case studies based in the UK, in which a community-based organisation attempted to change the sustainability practices of its members. The results of the research were inductively linked to practice theory, which has recently emerged in the study of sustainable consumption, and which links structural changes in society with the agency of the citizen-consumer to explain change.

There were two main findings of the research. First, people do change their sustainability practices as a result of involvement in community-based organisations which are active on sustainability. Participants in these processes report a range of sustainability practice histories, along with differing degrees of engagement in the communities to which they belong. These two factors, along with the nature of the community-based organisation and the activity that it runs, predict the intensity of change in sustainability practices. Second, this change in sustainability practices can best be explained using a practice theory model which integrates structure and agency in explanations of how change occurs. In this study the rules and resources that the organisation and its members mobilise to effect change, and participants’ reaction to these rules and resources, determine how change takes place.

In theorising the role of community-based organisations in promoting sustainability practices, this thesis expands the current contribution of practice theory to sustainable consumption. It also adds subtlety to the understanding of the relationship between community and sustainability practice in the literature.
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Publications related to this thesis


A copy of the first publication (in print) is included at the end of the thesis as required by university regulations.

Abbreviations

BTCV: British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CBO: Community-based organisation
CEG: Christian Ecology Group
Defra: Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
GG: Green Gym
HT: Holy Trinity
MS: Meanwood School
NFWI: National Federation of Women’s Institutes
WI: Women’s Institute
BC: Bollington Carbon Revolution
1 Introduction

1.1 Community and sustainability practice

Recent writing in the practice, policy and academic literature has suggested that projects run by community-based organisations, such as schools, places of worship and social clubs, can mobilise participants to take on more sustainable practices (Jackson, 2005; UK Government, 2005; Hopkins, 2008). Practitioners, policy makers and academics in the UK have claimed that such projects can moderate some of the harmful environmental and social effects of the current consumer-oriented culture, and encourage participants to embrace more sustainable lifestyles (Jackson, 2005; UK Government, 2005; Hopkins, 2008). This emergence of the community sector as a possible partner in solving sustainability problems relates to a series of literatures linking community and practice. The recent social policy literature has tended to emphasise the role of the voluntary and community sectors in co-governance: a process of collaboration with government in setting and achieving social objectives (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2004; Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006). Work on social capital has further legitimised such a partnership by claiming that organisations in the community have an important influence on the lives of their members (Putnam, 2000). In the geography literature, authors suggest that a new focus on place and the local is an empowering reaction to globalisation by local communities (Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2003).

Alongside the emergence of this idea in the various literatures, sustainability projects run by community-based organisations have burgeoned in recent years in the UK. Organisations at national and local levels, from the public, private and voluntary sectors have released funding or initiated projects to address participant sustainability practices at the community level. Witness, for instance, Defra’s Environmental Action Fund, the Women’s Institute’s 90@90 programme, the bottom-up Transition Towns movement, and Global Action Plan’s Ecoteams programme (Global Action Plan, 2006; National Federation of Women's Institutes, 2008; Transition Towns Network, 2008; UK Government, 2008). These projects have in common a desire to influence member practices, which seems to stem from a set of beliefs about the power of the local. For some organisations this relates to an instinct that responsibility for sustainability problems can be taken at a local level (UK Government, 2005; Ecocongregation, 2008; National Federation of Women's Institutes, 2008). In addition, there is a sense that local organisations have a closeness to participants which allows them to argue more convincingly for changes in practice (Global Action Plan, 2006). Some of these organisations purport that local, bottom-up
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processes are more likely to result in long-term change than government initiatives (Transition Towns Network, 2008).

These experiences are only starting to be explored in research. In the literature review I undertook for this thesis, very little research was found which dealt directly with the role of community-based organisations in influencing member sustainability practices (see 2.4). Jackson also notes a gap in research in this area in his extensive review of the literature on motivating sustainable consumption (2005). While he is positive about the role of community-based initiatives in addressing problems of sustainability, he points out that:

What is missing from this evidence base, at present, is unequivocal proof that community-based initiatives can achieve the level of behavioural change necessary to meet environmental and social objectives. There is simply not enough experience across enough areas and covering all the relevant parameters to determine precisely what form such initiatives should take, how they should be supported, what the best relationship between community-based social change and Government is, how relations between communities should be mediated, or what kinds of resources such initiatives require for success. (Jackson, 2005, p. 133)

The first contribution of this thesis is to begin to fill the gaps in the evidence on the role of community-based organisations in influencing participant practice identified by Jackson here (2005). In this thesis, I evaluate the effects of activities run by community-based organisations on the sustainability practices of participants in the UK, providing explanations for why participants are prepared to take on new practices, and what kind of projects encourage what kinds of participants to change.

This gap in the literature seems to be impacting on attempts to set up such projects in practice. In a policy briefing on the findings of ten substantial community change projects funded by Defra’s Environmental Action Fund, the Sustainable Development Commission found that practitioners were struggling with project design and execution, due to a lack of understanding of the existing evidence on behavioural change in a sustainability context. As their report put it:

It appears that many projects rely on unspoken assumptions about consumer behaviour and the factors that affect it, which do not draw on existing work on models of consumer behaviour or behaviour change. (Sustainable Development Commission, 2006, p.3)

For example, the Commission found that many practitioners made assumptions that increasing pro-environmental attitudes or awareness led to changes in behaviour, a connection that is both extensively explored and largely discredited in the sustainable consumption literature (see for instance Spaargaren, 1997; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). Extensive work on
behaviour change exists in the sustainable consumption literature including many theories and models of how change is stimulated (see Jackson, 2005 for a summary). This body of literature has not, however, previously been formally linked to the empirical problem of the role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants. The second contribution of this thesis is therefore to apply existing theories and understanding of behaviour change to this empirical world, thus aiding understanding of the means by which such projects instigate change and the capacity of such projects to stimulate their members to change.

The two topic-based contributions to knowledge of my thesis are therefore as follows:

1. An increased understanding of the role of community-based organisations in encouraging participants to change their sustainability practices.

2. An explanation of the role of community-based organisations in the light of existing theoretical and empirical research on sustainable consumption and behaviour change.

In the next section, I will explain a broader theoretical contribution that the thesis makes in linking social and environmental issues.

1.2 Linking the social and environmental

In this thesis I attempt to link an environmental problem (environmentally damaging consumption practices) with a social solution (community-based practice change). As such, the thesis weaves together socially and environmentally motivated literature, theory, methodology and methods in the exploration of this particular type of initiative, and interpretation of results. To some extent the link between social and environmental is familiar, as the interdisciplinary field of sustainable consumption in which this study belongs has at its core a natural science understanding of limits to the world’s resources and waste sinks, as well as a social sciences understanding of the way that society can change to accommodate this problem. The social science contribution to sustainable consumption is in itself interdisciplinary, with contributions from psychology, economics and more recently sociology (see for example Gatersleben and Vlek, 1997; Paavola, 2001; Southerton et al., 2004a). With each of these different disciplines comes a particular focus in explaining the problem of (uns)ustainable consumption: with research, for instance, on attitudes and social norms (psychology), game theory (economics) and the way that society moulds an individual’s opportunities to act (sociology). There are, of course, also interdisciplinary approaches to the problem of sustainable consumption, which attempt to integrate some of these perspectives (see for instance Seyfang, 2009).

Given that I focus in this thesis on a social institution’s (community-based organisation) attempts to influence its participants into taking on sustainability practices, the main disciplinary
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influence in this thesis is sociology and the sub-discipline of social policy. It makes sense to take sociology as a guiding discipline in this study given both its concern with social processes, and its emphasis on the socially constructed nature of practice (Giddens, 1984). For this reason I draw on, and contribute to, that particular strand of the sustainable consumption literature which takes a sociological approach (Shove, 2003; Spaargaren, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a; Warde, 2005). This involves using a particular theory of behaviour change, practice theory, that originates in sociology (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990) (see 2.2.2 for full discussion). In addition, I draw on the social policy literatures of community governance and volunteering to inform my understanding of the interventions I am studying (see 2.3). I also make a contribution to the literature on community governance and sustainability in providing an empirical context for understanding how these two concepts relate. Finally, the research strategy that structures the thesis also originates in social policy: Pawson and Tilley’s realistic evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) (see 3.3.2).

There is an added contribution to knowledge here, in the form of an expansion of the sociological approach to sustainable consumption. Until now, sociological sustainable consumption studies have focused on existing practices (often framed in terms of activities such as ‘washing’, ‘travelling’, ‘eating’) investigated in context (see for instance Shove, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a). They have also tended to focus on the social structures that affect practices, using concepts such as ‘lock-in’, and ‘choice-editing’ to explain ‘unsustainable’ practices (see Southerton et al., 2004b for an overview of barriers to sustainable consumption). In this thesis I am deviating from this approach in two ways. First, I am explicitly focusing on change of practice, indeed change of a range of sustainability practices through involvement in a community-based organisation. Second, I am attempting to combine the internal elements of practice theory (practical and discursive consciousness) with the external elements (rules and resources) to build an explanation of practice. I believe that my thesis adds to the current sociological literature of sustainable consumption, by expanding the frame of study to include change in practice, and to more formally incorporate internal factors (especially discursive consciousness).

My work also provides an applied understanding of the relationship between the concepts of sustainability practice and community. Previous work on the relationship between concepts of community and sustainability has been rather limited, and characterised by simplistic assumptions about the nature of community (see 2.3.2). A series of perspectives exist in the policy and academic literature that attempt to explain this relationship, some of which are more successful than others. My work provides a means of evaluating these different
perspectives, some of which prove to be less than successful at explaining the relationship between community governance and sustainability in this particular empirical context (see 8.5).

Note that while this sociology and social policy approach governs the direction of the thesis, this does not mean that I am exclusively examining sociological research here, and indeed my review of the literature, and analysis and discussion section of the thesis draw strongly on contributions from psychology, geography and political sciences.

In summary then, the third and fourth contributions to knowledge in this thesis are:

3. An expansion of the frame of sociological studies in sustainable consumption to integrate internal aspects into explanations of practice, and to examine changes in practice, rather than practice as it stands.

4. An expansion of the understanding of the relationship between concepts of community and sustainability practice.

In the rest of this introduction, I will set out the research questions for the thesis, then define some of the key concepts in use in this study in more detail before presenting the thesis structure.

### 1.3 Research questions

The underlying research question of this thesis is implicit in the title, and could be expressed as: what is the role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants? To be more specific this overarching question has been broken down into five sub-questions which will be referred to as the ‘research questions’ throughout the thesis. The research questions were written with the help of the sensitizing concepts that structure this thesis, ‘context’, ‘mechanisms’ and ‘outcomes’, in connection with the realistic evaluation research strategy (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) (see 3.3.2). Note that the sensitizing concepts and the broader research strategy of realistic evaluation are structuring devices for the whole thesis. The sensitizing concepts appear in the literature review as a starting point for talking about existing evidence, and in the names and structure of the results chapters. I believe this device has allowed me to pursue the evidence in a rigorous and structured way.

The first two research questions relate to the ‘context’ concept, and aim to explore the nature of the organisations and the individuals involved in community-based projects aimed at changing sustainability practices. These two questions assume that “Even the most mundane actions only make sense because they contain in-built assumptions about a wider set of social rules and institutions” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 64).
1. What is the capacity for community-based organisations to influence participants’ sustainability practice?

2. Who participates in community-based initiatives on sustainability?

The third and fourth research questions relate to the ‘outcomes’ concept and aim to find out the impacts of these projects on the participants’ sustainability practices, and more broadly on the participant in general. The latter are referred to as additional outcomes, and in the literature it was thought that they could have an important role in influencing sustainability practice (Jackson and Marks, 1999).

3. What effects do sustainability projects initiated by community-based organisations have on participants’ sustainability practice?

4. What other effects do such initiatives have on participants?

The final research question relates to the ‘mechanism’ concept and explores the means by which participants are triggered to take on new sustainability practices, or to amend existing practices.

5. How do sustainability projects run by community-based organisations stimulate change in a participant’s sustainability practice?

This last question is important because explanations of how change happens allow us to see more clearly where and how interventions can be made. In addition, such explanations are at the core of disciplinary debates and thus help to further theoretical understanding of sustainability practice change.

1.4 Definition of key concepts

Some of the key concepts used throughout this study, not least in the title and research questions, merit further elaboration before I embark on the thesis proper. This will also help to clarify the precise scope of the study.

1.4.1 Sustainability practice

There is an extensive literature on the nature of sustainable practice, which aims to measure the effects of specific activities on the environment and other people, and thus to define which specific activities are sustainable or not (see for instance Barrett et al., 2005). This thesis does not contribute to that literature. Instead I focus here on the process of practice change in a sustainability context. While I appreciate the importance of understanding which practices are sustainable and which are not, such an understanding is beyond the scope of this study. As such,
I do not define the precise desired outcomes on sustainability practice beyond the definition offered by each case under study. The definition of sustainability practice that I have created for use in this study is therefore:

*Sustainability Practice* The range of acts which are understood by a participant or a community-based organisation to impact positively on the global or local environment, or on other people.

The concept of ‘Sustainability Practice’, then is defined on a local level according to the activities that a group is involved in and the interpretation of those activities by participants. Indeed, it refers to the practices which an individual or group define as affecting sustainability. Because of this participant-driven definition of sustainability practice, some of the practices that people identified as impacting sustainability may be technically limited in effect. Indeed, the overall impact on the environment of each individual may be increased by involvement. The interest here is in how local understandings of sustainability practice can stimulate practice change, not what exactly that change should be. In an area (sustainability) where practice change is considered to be rather difficult to achieve, this is an important focus. Note that the word ‘practice’ rather than ‘behaviour’ is also significant. This places my work in the context of practice theory (see 2.2.2).

### 1.4.2 Community-based organisation

In making a connection between community and sustainability practice, the mediating concept is that of the ‘community-based organisation’. This is important, because as Chanan puts it: "Most people who get involved in community activity and keep it up do so, sooner or later, through involvement in a group of some kind" (Chanan, 2004, p.1). I have located two useful existing definitions of community-based organisations in the literature:

Organisations located within communities or spaces of interest and designed to meet the needs of those communities. (Thake, 2004, p.2)

The term ‘community-based organisations’ is used ... to refer to organisations such as settlements, social action centres, multi-purpose community centres, community associations, development trusts, tenants’ and residents’ associations, village halls and community farms / gardens, which are committed to working at the local and neighbourhood level. (Cairns et al., 2006, p.8)

These definitions both paint a broad picture of the kind of organisations that can be defined as community-based. The common factors here are the diversity of possible organisations included under this concept, the resulting lack of specificity regarding the exact nature of the organisations, and the local orientation of these organisations.
A ‘community-based organisation’ is only one of a series of concepts that have been used to represent these kinds of institutions. Others include ‘community initiatives’, ‘voluntary organisations’, ‘grassroots associations’, and ‘community sector’. Each of these was not quite adequate to define the kinds of organisations that I am studying here. ‘Community initiatives’ is a rather vague term used, but not defined, in a Defra-commissioned report on the potential for this sector to influence individuals (Centre for Sustainable Energy and Community Development Xchange, 2007). ‘Voluntary organisations’ cover much of the activity at community level, but also include organisations working on regional and national projects (Harris and Rochester, 2001). ‘Grassroots associations’ are local voluntary groups, and defined very similarly to community-based organisations above, but with more emphasis on the autonomy of groups (given that such associations are stimulated from the bottom up), and therefore excluding organisations that also operate in public or private sectors (Smith, 2000). The ‘community sector’ is defined very similarly to community-based organisations as: “Those organisations active on a local or community level, usually small, modestly funded and largely dependent on voluntary, rather than paid, effort.” (VolResource, 2007). This definition also excludes organisations operating partly in public or private sectors, however. It is interesting that the definition of community sector adds an emphasis on voluntary effort here which is useful in considering community-based organisations.

The definition of community-based organisations that I have created for use in this thesis is deliberately broad, to allow for an inclusive understanding of the term. It reads as follows:

Community-based organisation
Organisations or groups that exist within a community (either interest or place) with a local focus, with a predominantly voluntary nature, and separate from the core activities of state and business organisations.

My definition takes into account the rather loose nature of some organisations in the community, thus including both ‘organisations’ and ‘groups’. Some of my case studies indeed turn out to be groups within organisations (e.g. Christian Ecology Group within Holy Trinity church, see 4.3). The study also allows for such organisations within communities of place or of interest. It recognises that most of these activities have a predominantly voluntary nature, although it does not exclude organisations that have a non-voluntary element. Neither does it exclude state and business organisations acting within communities, although it explicitly does not intend to engage with core activities of these types of organisations. To clarify, one of my case studies followed a community-based organisation that ran a walking bus scheme for a school (state organisation), an activity which was not part of its core mission (education).
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of nine chapters including this introduction. In Chapter 2 I review the literature which relates to sustainable consumption, community governance and volunteering and the specific literature on interventions by community-based organisations to promote sustainability practices among participants. I analyse the latter using concepts of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes to provide a starting point for theorising on the topic of study. I also draw out debates on theories of behaviour in sustainable consumption, and understandings of the relation between concepts of community governance and sustainability. In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology and method used in the thesis, including explanations of the critical realist methodology, the evaluation strategy, case study approach, and specific data collection and analysis methods. My main structuring feature here is realistic evaluation, a social policy research framework which promotes theory-driven evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Chapters 4 to 7 are results and analysis chapters, and in each one I present results and analysis on one or two research questions, and link these back to the relevant part of the literature. In Chapter 4, I answer research question 1 which deals with the context of the community-based organisation in question, and its sustainability projects. Here, I outline each case study of a community-based organisation’s sustainability project in turn, and then make some generalisations about the contexts in question. These generalisations relate to the importance of social context in enabling community-level activity to influence participants’ practices. In Chapter 5, I answer research question 2 and in doing so outline the history of sustainability practice of case participants, as well as their involvement in community and as volunteers. In Chapter 6, I answer research questions 3 and 4, in describing the sustainability practice outcomes for participants, as well as additional outcomes that they reported. Here, I also explore the relationships between these different outcomes and between sustainability practice history of participants, the case study context and the intensity of sustainability practice outcomes that participants report. In Chapter 7, I answer research question 5 in outlining the mechanisms that stimulate change for participants. Here, I find that explanations of ‘how change occurs’ link back to practice theory, as all the mechanisms include both agency and structural triggers for change.

Chapter 8 is the discussion chapter, in which I present the full story of my findings on the role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practice in the light of the literature review. Here, I also discuss the implications of my findings for policy, the academic literature and for the specific interventions in question. Finally, Chapter 9 concludes with a summary of the thesis.
2 Community and Sustainability Practice

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I summarise the literature of particular relevance to the topic of my thesis. I address this literature in three parts. First, I outline the contribution of the general literature on sustainable consumption to the thesis (2.2). This is a wide-ranging literature which has many dimensions and, as such, I focus here on some specific areas. The main contribution from this literature is the theory of behaviour around which I base my work: practice theory. In addition, I draw on work on wellbeing and consumption. Second, I explore the literature on community and volunteering (2.3). Here, I refer both to literature on community sustainability and to the more general community development and third sector literature, all of which attempt to explain the relationship between community, community members and policy implementation. Finally, in the third part, I summarise the literature which relates directly to the research questions (2.4). Here, all the empirical and theoretical literature to date which touches directly on the role of community-based organisations in promoting sustainable practices is presented in the form of a descriptive model built around the key sensitising concepts of context, mechanisms and outcomes (from Pawson and Tilley, 1997). These three parts of the literature are addressed in turn below.

Before going on to discuss the three parts of the literature in detail, there are some key gaps in the literature which influenced the course of the thesis. First, the relatively new area of sustainable consumption literature which deals with practice theory is an appropriate framework for a study of the role of community in changing practice. Its dual focus on agency and structure mirrors the duality of community-based organisation and participant. Until now, practice theory has only been used to address existing practices, this thesis attempts to study practices which are being targeted for change. As such, the thesis represents a new way of using practice theory in explaining an empirical world. Second, it is clear from this review that the relationship between community and sustainability is currently rather under-researched. My empirical exploration of that boundary in this thesis is therefore filling a gap in knowledge. Finally, the existing literature on the role of community-based organisations in influencing sustainability practice is limited, and not addressed by any substantial research project to date. As such, this thesis also fills an empirical evidence gap in this area.
2.2 Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption is a field that concerns itself with the study of sustainable or pro-environmental behaviour, lifestyles and practices. In their book on sustainable consumption, Cohen and Murphy characterise the emergence of the field as a reaction to the framing of environmental problems as the responsibility of the producer (Cohen and Murphy, 2001), and to framing of environmental problems as connected to population growth (a position which inherently transfers responsibility to the developing world) (Cohen, 2001). They categorise and critique approaches to sustainable consumption as economic (based on the ‘unhelpfully simplistic’ idea that the problem results from the consumer having incomplete information or incorrect prices) or technological (based on the ‘optimistic’ belief that technology can solve the problem) (Cohen and Murphy, 2001). A more recent account from Jackson characterises unsustainable consumption as an over-reliance on finite resources by Western society, resulting in unacceptable environmental impacts coupled with an unfair distribution of resources in favour of the West (Jackson, 2006). In recent years, a wealth of material has emerged from the different disciplines associated with this topic, some of which is discussed below (see for instance Shove, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a; Seyfang, 2009).

To clarify: the sustainable consumption literature of relevance to this thesis is that which focuses on behaviour change rather than technical change. My focus in this thesis is on the process of changing behaviour, rather than on the nature of the desired behaviour change. This section of the literature review is therefore structured as follows. I begin with a discussion of the disciplines, theories and perspectives on sustainable consumption, in particular focusing on the distinction between individualist and contextual understandings of the field. I then discuss the guiding theory of this thesis: practice theory, in detail, including a summary of the general literature on practice theory, and a discussion of how that has been applied in (sustainable) consumption research. I also discuss how I understand my own research in terms of practice theory, and address potential criticisms arising from my approach. Finally, I discuss theories of wellbeing in sustainable consumption, which also have an important influence on the direction of the thesis.

2.2.1 Disciplines, theories and perspectives

Sustainable consumption as a field incorporates distinct perspectives which hinge on different conceptions of the roles of agency and structure, often in connection to the discipline in question (Spaargaren, 2000; Seyfang, 2005; Hobson, 2006; Seyfang and Paavola, 2008; Seyfang, 2009). Indeed, behavioural change is a topic of interest for many disciplines in the
social sciences, and researchers in the core disciplines of sociology, psychology and economics have theorised on sustainable consumption. Spaargaren identifies a distinction between the agency-oriented perspectives familiar in economics and social-psychology where sustainable consumption is explained theoretically in terms of the internal motivations of the individual, and sociological analyses which take a structuration perspective (Spaargaren, 2000; see also Jackson, 2005 which summarises many theories in this area). Seyfang and Paavola categorise research into three areas, two of which (‘cognitive’ and ‘social-marketing’) focus on a strategy of providing information to change individual behaviour (agency-oriented), while a third (‘systems of provision’) appreciates the possibility of lock-in for individuals who may not have the ability to act within the structures they inhabit (Seyfang and Paavola, 2008). Elsewhere, Seyfang characterises these perspectives more simply as ‘utilitarian’, ‘social and psychological’ and ‘infrastructures of provision’: perspectives which map onto the disciplines of economics, (social) psychology, and sociology (Seyfang, 2009). In this section I will discuss the dominant ‘individualist’ approach to sustainable consumption, and reactions to it in the broader sustainable consumption literature, before going on to discuss the more contextualised approach in more detail.

An individualist approach to sustainable consumption research and policy tends therefore to focus on “the consumer as the principle lever of change” (Sanne, 2002, p. 273). Both Seyfang and Hobson note a tendency in mainstream UK policy to paint the individual as the agent of change in sustainable consumption (Seyfang, 2005; Hobson, 2006). Both authors contrast this perspective with contextualised visions of social change which see individual buying power as an impotent strategy for sustainable consumption (see for instance Shove, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a). In a critique of this position, Maniates sees such ‘individualization’ as part of a political movement in the 1980s to downsize government and shift the locus of responsibility to the individual consumer (Maniates, 2002). Maniates believes that such a strategy frames individual laziness and ignorance as the cause of environmental problems and marginalises more substantive solutions. Hobson cites the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR, 1998) in the UK to similar effect:

Ultimately the burden on the UK’s environment is attributable to the choices and the actions of the consumers. To a great extent producers are, quite naturally, responding to meet the preferences of the consumers. (DETR cited in Hobson, 2006, p. 285)

DETR clearly attributes responsibility for environmental problems to the individual (consumer) here, and detracts blame from the producer. Witness the use of language: the ‘burden’ on the environment is due to failures by the consumer and the logical producer
responds ‘quite naturally’ to their preferences. The implication is that the producer is fulfilling his responsibility (in following preferences) while the consumer fails hers (in taking the wrong choices).

Many of the models profiled in Jackson’s extensive review of sustainable consumption theories (especially those originating from psychology or economics) offer mainly internal explanations for behaviour concentrating on rational or norm-led processes, implying an individualistic approach (Jackson, 2005). In economics, rational choice theory posits that individuals will maximise their own ‘utility’ when making decisions, thus taking decisions that will result in the most benefit to themselves (Elster, 1989). This model assumes that rational thought is the impetus for changing behaviour. In (social) psychology, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (a prominent model of attitude-behaviour relations) concentrates on the impact of the individual’s attitude towards the behaviour, perceived control of the behaviour and perceived social norms regarding the behaviour, with social structures affecting individual decision-making only through how the social norms are interpreted by the individual (Ajzen, 1991). This model therefore proposes that people’s attitudes, their perception of whether they can do something or not, and their perception of the social pressure to engage in behaviour provides the impetus to change behaviour by forming an intention to act: again a rather ‘internal’ (and individualist) explanation.

One of the most prominent debates relating to individualist perspectives is that which surrounds the ‘attitude-behaviour gap’. The concept ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ refers to the disparity between stated attitudes and behaviour on environmental issues. The idea that pro-environmental attitudes lead to pro-environmental behaviour has been extensively discussed and critiqued in the environmental literature (Hobson, 2001; Jensen, 2002; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Maiteny, 2002; Southerton et al., 2004b). In some ways, this has become a sticking point in discussion and policy on pro-environmental behaviour, as despite evidence of this gap, policy makers continue to target attitudes and knowledge of individuals as a trigger for change (Southerton et al., 2004b). This is problematic because it assumes a simple relationship between attitudes and behaviour which is not found empirically. In a detailed critique of the attitude-behaviour ‘paradigm’, Spaargaren points out that this perspective emphasises attitudes over other factors as a determinant of behaviour (thus ignoring choice sets available to the consumer), relies on behaviour being understood in the first place (thus ignoring habit), and treats ‘social norms’ as a fixed entity (thus ignoring the capacity for agents to change such structural features) (Spaargaren, 1997).

Suggested bridges for the gap between pro-environmental attitudes and pro-environmental behaviour (from within Spaargaren’s ‘attitude-behaviour paradigm’) include
adding explanatory mechanisms such as knowledge of how and why to make changes (Jensen, 2002), or experiences that are given environmental meaning by individuals (Maiteny, 2002). In order to take account of the attitude-behaviour gap, revised versions of the Theory of Planned Behaviour incorporate external (structural) processes into explanations of change, alongside the internal knowledge and attitude factors (Gatersleben and Vlek, 1997; Klöckner and Blöbaum, 2008). These psychological theories have ‘external’ elements in the incorporation of social norms and ‘situational factors’, but these seem to be rather peripheral to the core discipline. Note, then, that the concept of the attitude-behaviour gap does not discredit the family of theories associated with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, given that the incorporation of external elements (e.g. subjective norms, situational factors) and further internal elements (e.g. perceived behavioural control) continue to explain behaviour satisfactorily (Jonas et al., 1995).

The emphasis on individual agency in sustainable consumption is not inevitable, however, and exploring both the limits of agency, and the interactions between agency and structure, has led to useful insights in this field (Burgess et al., 2003; Shove, 2003; Spaargaren, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a; van Vliet et al., 2005). Incorporation of structural drivers of behaviour into theory, sometimes in interaction with agency, is a contribution which finds its roots in sociology. Authors here stress the importance of social context in giving meaning to sustainable consumption lifestyles, and in allowing genuine choice for individuals who want to live more sustainably (ibid.). In theoretical work from this direction, Spaargaren takes a structuration perspective on sustainable consumption (guided by Giddens), where individual agency (or capacity to act) is determined by the structure of the opportunities offered, which in turn is influenced by individual agency (Giddens, 1984; Spaargaren, 2003). A structuration perspective on sustainable consumption therefore sees the individual and the context in which she lives as strongly interdependent. To give a brief example: an individual choosing to own a car helps to propagate a social system which relies on car transport. On the other hand, an individual may find operating without a car in a system designed for car use a rather onerous practice.

It is worth noting that this understanding of sustainable consumption as occurring in social context is most consistently treated in the literature on practice theory, of which structuration is an example. It is also emerging in the more general literature on sustainable consumption, as a result of the critiques of individualistic approaches expressed above. Princen et al., for instance talk of a:

… need to see consumption not just as an individual's choice among goods but as a stream of choices and decisions winding its way through the various stages
of extraction, manufacture, and final use, embedded at every step in social relations of power and authority (Princen et al., 2002, p. 12)

Note in particular the emphasis on power here, which ties in to ideas of responsibility in sustainable consumption (see Middlemiss, under review for a more extensive treatment of responsibility). Young et al. also address the social context of decision-making for ethical consumers:

All decisions exist in a wider social context. This means that decisions will be influenced by a wide range of criteria other than sustainability, such as access to products and services, time (perceived and real) available, peer pressure, quality and safety factors, aesthetics and of course, financial cost. (Young et al., 2004, p. 2)

These authors paint a broad picture of individual lifestyles that include sustainable and other criteria in making purchasing decisions. Spaargaren argues that such a situated understanding of acts of sustainable consumption represents a new paradigm (Spaargaren, 1997).

The specific contribution of interest here is that of a group of theories of behaviour called ‘practice theories’ that try to integrate both internal and external drivers into explanations of behaviour, as well as bundling together behaviours, attitudes, ‘know how’ and emotional responses as ‘practice’ (Reckwitz, 2002). Practice theory is the model that I have used as a basis for this thesis, and in the following section I will discuss this in more detail.

2.2.2 Practice theory

I begin by introducing the general literature on practice theory. I then explain how this theory has been taken up in sustainable consumption to date. Finally, I explain how practice theory is applied in this thesis.

Practice theory refers to a group of theories that deal with ‘practice’ as a focal point of social research, rather than the individual or structures inhabited by that individual (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002). Practice theory is a relatively new way of thinking about behaviour, and has emerged from a discipline (sociology) which does not tend towards unified theories. As such, there is no authoritative version of practice theory (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005). There are some high profile and influential proponents of practice theories, however, including Giddens and Bourdieu (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990). These theories are distinctive for several reasons which will be discussed in detail below. In summary, they focus on the relationship between agent and structure as the locus of change. They also package behaviour, attitudes, know-how, knowledge, motivation, and emotional responses under one label ‘practice’, recognising the interconnected nature of these aspects of an act. They clearly
recognise the importance of habit in influencing behaviour. They also emphasise collective development of behaviour, rather than theorising behaviour as an individual endeavour.

In its focus on ‘practice’, practice theory avoids preference for either the individual or society (agent or structure) as a locus of explanations of change (Warde, 2005). This is evident in Giddens’s structuration theory, which posits that the domain of study in the social sciences: “...is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time.” (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). By placing practice as central in the study of the social sciences, practice theory avoids focussing on either the individual agent or the society that she inhabits, and instead explores the interaction between agency and structure and how that creates practice. This represents a distinct ontology among practice theoreticians, who share a belief that "the social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organised around shared practical understandings" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 3) in contrast to conceptions of the social that privilege individuals, structures or systems. Practice theory can also be argued to possess a relativist epistemology, where knowledge and truth are "no longer automatically self-transparent possessions of mind" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 12) and are rather mediated by arrangements in the world, and interactions between people. Indeed, because practice evolves from the interaction between structure and agency, knowledge can be seen to be a feature of groups rather than individuals, with shared understandings resulting in shared behaviours (Schatzki, 2001). The greatest contrast to other dominant theories of behaviour in the sustainable consumption field here (especially rational choice theory and the theory of planned behaviour outlined above) is that practice theory does not prioritise individual choice or action (agency) as the main trigger for social change (Warde, 2005).

The concept of ‘practice’ is unusual in explanations of behaviour change in that it incorporates many internal elements that might affect action within the one concept (behaviour, attitudes, know-how, knowledge, emotion, motivation) rather than focusing on the relationship between elements of the above. Reckwitz defines practice as follows:

A ‘practice’ (Praktik) is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249)

The internal factors here are wide ranging and include background knowledge and ‘knowing how’ one can make changes, as well as ‘motivational knowledge’. In contrast to other theories on behaviour (especially for instance Theory of Planned Behaviour), the exact
relationship between internal factors is not specified, just noted as ‘interconnected’. Crucially, practices can also be conscious or unconscious, and may thus involve more or less cognitive processes, with habitual behaviour being mainly made up of bodily activity, as opposed to mental activity. Giddens refers to these two polarities of practice as ‘discursive consciousness’ and ‘practical consciousness’ (Giddens, 1984). As such, practices consist of 'doings' and 'sayings', in other words they are "concerned with both practical activity and its representations" (Warde, 2005, p. 134). This is a substantial departure from other theories, which tend to characterise the rational or norm-related aspects of mental activity as holding sway over bodily activity.

Giddens characterises the external influences on practice as consisting of rules and resources, which amount to the ‘duality’ of structure (Giddens, 1984). In his understanding rules have two aspects: “Rules relate on the one hand to the constitution of meaning and on the other to the sanctioning of modes of social conduct” (Giddens, 1984, p. 18). According to Sewell’s interpretation of Giddens’s concept, rules are also ‘generalisable procedures’ which can be transposed to different circumstances as they arise (Sewell, 1992). As such, they amount to a collective understanding of the way things should be and the way that people should practice. Resources, on the other hand, are “structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction”, and are inherently associated with power, in that they are a means by which power is exercised (ibid. p. 15). Giddens makes a distinction between authoritative resources (derived from the coordination of agent activity) and allocative resources (stemming from the control of the material world), which Sewell helpfully simplifies as ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ (Sewell, 1992). Sewell also clarifies that both human and non-human resources can be used to maintain or enhance power, and crucially that agents can be empowered by their access to resources (ibid.). This has resonances in my work later in this thesis (Chapter 4). Sewell emphasises the importance of taking into account the relationship between structure and agency in explanations of change, as he suggests that Bourdieu’s work in this area over-emphasises structure and as a result tends to prohibit discussions of agent-led change (ibid.).

Various writers have discussed or applied practice theories in consumption or sustainable consumption studies (Shove, 2003; Spaargaren, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a; Warde, 2005). This is a relatively new theoretical area in sustainable consumption studies. These authors criticise the individualistic framing of sustainable consumption discussed above because it results in specific policy measures on sustainable consumption (e.g. economic measures, or information provision) being prioritised as solutions (Southerton et al., 2004b). Shove also
argues that this tendency to focus on the individual as the locus of change in the mainstream debate:

...misses the point that much consumption is customary, governed by collective norms, and undertaken in a world of things and sociotechnical systems that have stabilizing effects on routines and habits. (Shove, 2003, p. 9)

The history of interest in the individual in mainstream sustainable consumption research, and subsequent lack of attention to the structural factors that Shove identifies, probably explains the focus in practice theory based sustainable consumption research on the structural determinants of practice, rather than on agency-led change.

Structural factors are not seen by these writers to necessarily encourage pro-environmental practice, rather, to make such practice feasible. In other words, the structures of society constrain and enable people to act in certain ways. As Spaargaren puts it:

When there is a high level - both in quantitative and qualitative respects - of green provisioning, people are more or less brought into a position in which the greening of their corresponding lifestyle segment becomes a feasible option. (Spaargaren, 2003, p. 690)

In categorising shortcomings of the current situation regarding such ‘green provisioning’, Southerton et al. identify three types of constraint (Southerton et al., 2004b). First, there may be a lack of resources for sustainable living which Bourdieu identifies as economic, social and cultural capital, the latter being the "knowledge of, engagement in and judgement about 'consecrated' cultural practices" (ibid. p. 38). Second, norms of social interaction represent potential constraints which relate to the requirements of fitting in to a community, and as Southerton et al. express it: “understanding and appropriating the rules of engagement in any practice” (Southerton et al., 2004b, p. 38). Third, material and infrastructural arrangements will affect people’s ability to take on a practice (for instance spatial proximity of services could enable or disable choices). Southerton et al expand on the effect of these material or infrastructural arrangements with Levett’s idea of 'choice sets' which are the sets of possibilities available to people as a result of the social structures in which they live (Levett et al., 2003). As Southerton et al. put it:

To say that people have individual choice when food shopping is to work with a particularly limited interpretation of the word 'choice', and to ignore the socio-technical infrastructures that underlie and condition these choices in the first place. (Southerton et al., 2004b, p. 39)

Choice sets are therefore ‘conditioned’ by the three identified constraints to sustainable consumption (resources, norms and infrastructure).
Alongside this interest in how social structures affect the ability of agents to take on sustainable practices, Spaargaren has translated a specific strand of practice theory (Giddens’s structuration) for use in sustainable consumption research (Spaargaren, 2003). In doing so he characterises sustainable consumption research as having the following focus:

… the process of reducing the environmental impacts of consumption in distinct domains of social life in terms of the deliberate achievements of knowledgeable and capable agents who make use of the possibilities offered to them in the context of specific systems of provision (Spaargaren, 2003, p. 688, emphasis in original)

Note the centrality of practice (here ‘achievements’) which is characteristic of practice theory. In contrast to other interpretations of the theory, here practice is ‘deliberate’ and performed by ‘knowledgeable and capable agents’, however, showing rather more emphasis on ‘discursive consciousness’ as Giddens would call it than ‘practical consciousness’ or habit (Giddens, 1984). Spaargaren’s ‘domains of social life’, often expressed in terms of the activities that people engage in (for instance shopping, eating, travelling) are central in work on practice theory in sustainable consumption. In Spaargaren’s analysis these domains of social life aggregate to make up a ‘lifestyle’, where one or more domains might be contradictory. Studies in this area have tended to focus on one or more domain of practice, analysing the way that practice is affected by agency and structure relations (for instance Shove, 2003; van Vliet et al., 2005).

To finish the discussion of practice theory here, it is important to understand my particular research topic in the context of practice theory, and to justify its choice as a core theory with which to study this research topic. To that end I will first specify which practices this thesis is exploring, then discuss how the work fits into aspirations of practice theory in sustainable consumption. Finally, I discuss the possible concerns with relation my research’s fit to practice theory and provide some answers to these.

This thesis brings into question several different practices. First, the practice of participation in a project on sustainability led by a community-based organisation. Second, the practice of attempting to reduce impacts on the environment and other people, as collaboratively defined and promoted by the particular individual and community-based organisation, according to their specific goals (see definition of ‘sustainability practices’, 1.4.1). This second set of practices has implications for a group of other practices, depending again on the particular individual and community-based organisation, which focus around various facets of day-to-day living (e.g. gardening practices, energy use, shopping choices), what Spaargaren would call the domains of practice (Spaargaren, 2003). As such, this thesis explores the question of how the
practice of involvement in community-based activities on sustainability affects an individual’s pattern of consumption practices. While much sustainability practice exists within the ‘discursive consciousness’ of the individual concerned (due in these types of interventions to its explicit nature), the domains of practice can often be part of the ‘practical consciousness’ or habitual. The interventions under study here mainly address discursive consciousness, although they have the potential to convert practical consciousness into discursive consciousness as habits are recognised and new ways of behaving are adopted.

My thesis complements the growing interest in practice theory for sustainable consumption in several ways. As a policy measure for encouraging sustainable lifestyles, the efforts of community-based organisations to change members’ sustainability practices can be explained as a ‘social intermediary’ (the community-based organisation) reshaping members’ opportunities for sustainable consumption (Southerton et al., 2004a). The community-based organisation does this by offering new resources to its members, and exposing them to revised rules which encourage or enable sustainable practices, which the members can then choose to enact. Given the logic in practice theory of practices being shaped by both agency and structure, this type of intervention maps better onto practice theory than the other dominant theories in behaviour change discussed above. In effect, as a policy measure, I would argue that the interventions under study here represent one of the ‘routes for innovation’ based on practice theory that Spaargaren identifies as an important aim of sustainable consumption research (Spaargaren, 2003).

The idea of using the membership of community-based organisations as a means of encouraging more generally sustainable practices also fits well into conceptions of practice adoption and development. As Warde explains:

> Processes of enrolment into practices will range from introduction to domestic ones during infancy to joining of formal associations for the pursuit of social and recreational activities. (Warde, 2005, p. 145)

Indeed, Warde identifies a move away from analysis of individual choices towards understanding “collective development of modes of appropriate conduct in everyday life” (Warde, 2005, p. 146). In effect, this kind of intervention attempts to develop sustainability practices through collective action at the community level. As such, in studying this intervention type, I focus on understanding a specific process "through which modes of consumption become embedded in conventions of daily practice" (Southerton et al., 2004b, p. 33), albeit in a rather different way to previous research.

In this thesis I concentrate on a particular intervention to initiate such a process of embedding practice, rather than researching an existing domain of practice in detail (as
discussed above). Given that I have taken a rather different approach to other proponents of practice theory, in focusing on an intervention rather than a domain, I should deal with possible criticisms that this could raise. At the centre of my research is the individual’s sustainability practice, a concept which is defined by the interaction between the individual and the community-based organisation concerned. This sustainability practice will potentially affect many other individual practices framed in a more familiar way for this practice theory-led sustainable consumption research (e.g. cooking, heating, washing, travelling, gardening) which Spaargaren would call “distinct domains of social life” (Spaargaren, 2003, p. 688). Indeed, Spaargaren would use the concept of ‘lifestyle’ to describe such bundles of practices (after Giddens), where lifestyle means an integrated set of practices that connect to a particular aspect of an individual’s self-identity (Spaargaren, 1997).

By bundling a group of practices which relate to sustainability, I am implicitly placing an emphasis on the individual as the holder of sustainability practices. Some authors in research area make efforts to distance themselves from the individual as a unit of analysis, in reaction to the bodies of research from different disciplines outlined above (Shove, 2003; Spaargaren, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004b). Indeed, Spaargaren points out that an individual may hold highly sustainable practices in one area of her life, and highly unsustainable practices in another (Spaargaren, 2003). A more accepting view is offered by Warde, citing Reckwitz (2002), who does not object to the individual being part of the focus:

This view, while minimizing the analytic importance of individuality, does not prohibit the description and characterization of the consumption behaviour of a single individual. An individual’s pattern of consumption is the sum of the moments of consumption which occur in the totality of his or her practices. (Warde, 2005, p. 144)

I believe that the implicit focus on the individual is made less problematic by the interventions I am exploring in this research, which often explicitly aim to give people an opportunity to think holistically about their own practices which relate to sustainability (and thus to address the ‘sum of the moments of consumption’ as explained by Warde above). In a sense, the individual participates in the bundle of practices investigated in my research, thus making them a suitable point of analysis.

This section has outlined practice theory as a guiding behavioural theory for the thesis. It has explained how practice theory has been used in explaining sustainable consumption before, and how it applies to this particular thesis. In discussing the relatively new area of sustainable consumption literature which deals with practice theory, in contrast to other dominant theories in this area, I believe I have proven that this is an appropriate framework for a study of the role of
community in changing practice, due to its dual focus on agency and structure. This thesis takes a different approach to practice theory, given its concern with changing practices rather than studying a practice *in situ*. It also places more emphasis on the agency of the participant than have studies to date.

### 2.2.3 Consumption and wellbeing

Alongside the broader debates on how behaviour is changed within the sustainable consumption field, an interesting body of work on wellbeing and consumption has emerged in the past decade. This merits exploration here because authors have made connections between wellbeing, sustainable consumption, and ideas of community which tie in to the empirical focus of my thesis.

For Jackson and Marks, the increase in consumption seen in the global North over the past fifty years has been a wrong-headed attempt to satisfy non-material needs with material artefacts (Jackson and Marks, 1999). They conceptualise our current ‘over-consumption’ as individuals trying to satisfy non-material needs (such as community, love, belonging) using material goods, in an ultimately futile exercise. This paints a picture of modern society which is failing in producing human wellbeing, due to one set of ‘satisfiers’ being used to attempt to fulfil the role of another. Interestingly the authors see this as an opportunity for sustainability. While consumption does not offer people increased wellbeing, it is possible that reduced consumption associated with the sustainable consumption agenda could. As such:

> Environmental imperatives—the demands to reduce the material impact of human activities—are often portrayed and often perceived as constraining and threatening of human welfare. In contrast, the message of the analysis in this paper is that the existing patterns of consumption constrain and threaten human welfare. Reducing the material profligacy of our lives will help the environment. It will also help us. Revisioning the way we satisfy our non-material needs is not the bitter pill of eco-fascism; it is the most obvious avenue for renewing human development. (Jackson and Marks, 1999, pp. 439-440)

There are links here with discussions of social capital in a sustainable consumption context which try to draw a connection between the problems of reduced social cohesion and environmental degradation, and potential sustainability solutions inherent in increasing social capital and reunifying community (Pennington and Rydin, 2000).

These ideas have been developed into a larger vision on sustainable consumption by Seyfang, a vision which is espoused in the policy sphere by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) (Seyfang, 2009). Seyfang describes the new conception of sustainable consumption in the light of wellbeing as follows:
This alternative conception of sustainable consumption entails reducing the consumption of consumers in developed nations, and redefining 'wealth', 'prosperity' and 'progress' in order to construct new social and economic institutions for governance which value the social and environmental aspects of wellbeing alongside the economic. (Seyfang, 2006, p. 385)

Seyfang paints a picture of a sustainable consumption which engages with issues of equity between developed and developing worlds, consideration of social and environmental wellbeing (alongside economic wellbeing) and reframing of how we think of progress. Crucially, this vision involves a collective approach to reshaping infrastructures of provision which currently hamper sustainable consumption (Seyfang, 2009). Seyfang associates the 'New Economics' sustainable consumer with Dobson’s vision of an ecological citizen: a citizen that understands how their own actions impact on others, and that tries to live within a responsible ecological footprint (Dobson, 2003). Incidentally, Dobson also brings up the possibility that people have the potential to do right by the environment, are ‘virtuous’, without necessarily being forced to be so (ibid.). Altogether, Seyfang’s work posits a rather more complex relationship between wellbeing, consumption and community. Here, wellbeing is the measure of progress, and sustainable consumption is created by collaborative efforts in communities which are understood to create wellbeing. There is still a sense that community action on sustainability might create both more sustainable practices and wellbeing here, something that receives further attention in my empirical work (especially 6.3).

Elsewhere, Seyfang and Smith characterise the ‘quality of life’ agenda as a socially-oriented environmental agenda that complements the technically-oriented agenda of ecological modernization more dominant in the environmental policy field (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Seyfang and Smith argue that this vision of incorporating environment and community seems to be spreading to more mainstream actors. For instance, the very existence of Defra policies that target community as a trigger for sustainability, shows a shift in understanding of the ways in which transitions to sustainable development can come about, which places a new emphasis on the role of society (as opposed to economy or technology) in instigating change (ibid.).

2.3 Community governance and volunteering

The concept of community has been used extensively in a wide range of (sustainability) research contexts. Here, I start by looking at the general literature on the idea of community as a potential locus or agent of change in a section on community governance. This literature includes contributions from geography on the appropriateness of place or community as a locus of attention (Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2003). In addition, I use sources from writers on community governance which look at how community is portrayed and used as a locus and
agent of change (Alcock and Christensen, 1995; Champlin, 1998; Etzioni, 1998; Onyx and Dovey, 1999; Kendall, 2000; Popple and Redmond, 2000; Gilchrist, 2003; Kendall, 2003; Osborne and McLaughlin, 2004; Clarke, 2005; Fremeaux, 2005; Williams, 2005; Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006; Hutter, 2006; Popple, 2006). I then examine previous research which considers the role of community governance in the context of sustainability. The body of literature I am reviewing here includes key policy documents on sustainable development strategy (UK Government, 2005), as well as more specific documents about policy initiatives in the area (Defra, 2008b; UK Government, 2008). From the academic literature, I draw on sources dealing with the role of community in a sustainability context (Warburton, 1998; Jackson and Marks, 1999; Carr, 2000; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; Murray, 2000; Pennington and Rydin, 2000; Hobson, 2001; Sargisson, 2001; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Healey et al., 2003; Evans et al., 2004; Meadowcroft, 2004; Agyeman, 2005; McCarthy, 2005; Newman and Dale, 2005; Roberts, 2007; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Hopkins, 2008; Seyfang, 2009). Finally, I look at the literature on volunteering which has important connections with this research area, but no known contribution to date from the sustainability literature. This literature includes a substantial body of data gleaned from longitudinal survey research (Ruston, 2000; Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007). It also includes academic contributions from the field (Pearce, 1993; Chinman and Wandersman, 1999; Snyder and Omoto, 2001; Busell and Forbes, 2002; Chanan, 2003; Kendall, 2003; MacNeela, 2008). Since the participants of the projects that I am investigating are volunteers, it is important to take into account this literature in understanding their actions.

2.3.1 Community governance

Marsden usefully characterises the recent history of the concept of community, as ‘lost’ in the discourse of globalisation and ‘found’ in more recent work on communitarianism and social capital (Marsden, 2008). Indeed, in discourses of globalisation, community is assumed to be harking back to the past, and these new perspectives re-emphasise the value of community as a locus or agent of change in the post-modern world. The idea of community or place as an appropriate locus for social change, is raised by the geography literature on the connected concepts of ‘local’ and ‘place’ (Escobar, 2001; Gibson-Graham, 2003). Escobar argues that the concept of ‘place’ provides a means of grounding and understanding work on social movements in contrast to the concept of ‘space’ associated with discourses of globalisation (Escobar, 2001). In Gibson-Graham’s view, re-localisation is an empowering act for local places in the face of globalisation, with the ‘ethics of the local’ subverting widely accepted assumptions of progress and modernisation (Gibson-Graham, 2003).
Alongside this more philosophical argument for the importance of community, lies a policy-based emphasis on the concept. Since New Labour came to power in 1997, there has been a reappraisal of the voluntary and community sectors as partners in the provision of services traditionally performed by the public sector in the UK (Kendall, 2000; Popple and Redmond, 2000; Gilchrist, 2003; Williams, 2005). New Labour set itself apart from the Conservatives in the early days of its government by shifting the rhetoric on the role of the voluntary sector (Kendall, 2000). Under the Conservatives, the voluntary and community sectors had a role as ‘service providers’, whereas under New Labour the sectors were to be engaged in ‘community governance’, the collaborative management (both provision of services and creation of policy) of community activities involving both government and third sector (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2004). The shift of the role of the voluntary and community sectors mirrors a more general move towards ‘governance’ rather than ‘government’ under New Labour: involving non-state actors in decision-making and implementation (Hutter, 2006). In practical terms, the shift of government to governance has resulted in the outsourcing of functions previously performed by government to voluntary or community organizations in the areas of healthcare, community development and more recently sustainability (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2004).

The ‘joined-up government’ agenda that New Labour emphasised on coming to power, posits that complex problems (such as sustainability) need holistic, multi-agency responses (Kendall, 2003). This implies a partnership between government and the voluntary sector, working together to solve the problems of sustainability. The concepts of co-production and co-governance are useful here, terms which define different varieties of partnership in delivery of services and policy (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2004; Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006). Osborne and McLaughlin define co-production as shared delivery of services, and co-governance as shared construction of policy, management and service delivery (2004). Brandsen and Pestoff categorise partnership working slightly differently into three types: co-governance (participating in planning and delivery of public services); co-management (production of services in collaboration); and co-production (citizens produce their own services) (2006). All of these approaches involve community helping to implement the agenda, but being differently placed in terms of the power that it has to steer the overall course of the work. A co-governance approach, as defined by both authors above, inherently recognises that community and government parties bring different interests to the table, and that as a result they might benefit from recognition of those interests in the way power is shared around partnership projects (Onyx and Dovey, 1999).

Characterising community governance as a ‘partnership’ is a rather positive take on government’s involvement in community, and a more critical perspective, seen frequently in the literature in this area, portrays government’s use of community as instrumental. Here,
community is conceived of as an instrument for government policy (Popple and Redmond, 2000; Fremeaux, 2005). Arguably, instrumentalism runs counter to the core values of community development which aims to act as a liberating force for the poorest in society (Popple and Redmond, 2000). Instrumentalism also fails to value community participation as important in its own right, not just as a vehicle for delivering government objectives (Gilchrist, 2003). In addition, challenging and adventurous projects are believed to lose out as a result of funding being attached to governmental targets (Alcock and Christensen, 1995; Popple and Redmond, 2000; Cairns et al., 2006). There are also likely to be differences in governmental and community group views of community function and indeed the motivation for involvement in activities in the first place. Swaroop and Morenoff, for instance, distinguish between expressive and instrumental acts of involvement in community activities: the former being motivated by one’s sense of identity, and the latter one’s functional and political concerns (2006).

As such, instrumentalism suggests a change in power dynamics within the community sector. As Onyx and Dovey explain:

Currently the community sector is under strong pressure from the corporate capitalist state to collaborate with it in its strategy of achieving similar welfare, and other social, outcomes with considerably less funding and support. (Onyx and Dovey, 1999, p. 187)

In essence, an instrumental viewpoint on the community sector inherently exploits the sector by expecting outcomes to be delivered cheaply and independently of government. In a connected debate on the treatment of citizenship by New Labour, Clarke talks of four phases of engagement: activation, empowerment, responsibilization (transfer of responsibility to citizens) and abandonment (withdrawal of support) (Clarke, 2005). These arguments are rarely applied to understandings of sustainability and community.

The framing of community as an agent or locus for social change might be imagined to imply a particular political perspective, but a wide range of perspectives are shown in discussions of these issues. In work on social capital, Champlin proposes a spectrum of views between: privatising everything so that social capital can emerge and replace the state (which is seen to have destroyed social capital in the first place) to the idea that the government should provide all services to individuals without relying on community involvement. (Champlin, 1998). The first end of the spectrum shows that visions of community as an agent for social change can be associated with a neo-liberal ideology, something that is supported by other authors in this area (Popple, 2006). An alternative view is that the idea of community as locus of change connects to the third way discourse prevalent in the US and UK (Delanty, 2003). Communitarianism, as developed by Etzioni, is an example of this, where both individualism
and the importance of structure are emphasised in conceiving community (Etzioni, 1995). As Etzioni explains: “the preservation of individual liberty depends on the active maintenance of the institutions of civil society” (Etzioni, 1998, p. 42). Finally, a discourse of community as locus for social change has also been manifest in left-wing politics, and in particular in association with environmental discussions of radical social change (Sargisson, 2001; McCarthy, 2005). As such, it is clear that framing community as an agent or locus of change is not restricted to one particular political position.

2.3.2 Community governance in sustainability

There is some history of interest in community governance in sustainability research and as such this is a rather large body of literature. My main focus here is on the strand of research which connects (or could be used to connect) community governance to changes in practice. This consists of a disparate group of sources and perspectives which approach the issue in a variety of ways. These different perspectives on community governance and sustainability practice will be outlined in turn in the following section. Note that sources directly referring to community-based organisations and their attempts to change practice are not included here, see the separate discussion below (2.4).

The first perspective relates to the instrumental perspective outlined in the general discussion of community governance above. In the context of sustainability policy, community is presented as a potential partner for government in promoting sustainable practices or sustainability policy more generally (UK Government, 2005). There is much optimism within the UK government about the role of community in promoting sustainability. For instance, in the 2005 Defra strategy document on sustainable development, community groups are seen to have the following potential:

Community groups can help tackle climate change, develop community energy and transport projects, help minimize waste, improve the quality of the local environment, and promote fair trade and sustainable consumption and production. (UK Government, 2005, p. 27)

This instrumental view on community as a promoter of sustainability policy may represent an attempt to make amends for perceived failure in more general attempts at mass communication with individuals (such as the ‘are you doing your bit?’ campaign of the late ‘90s) (Hobson, 2001). There is a sense here that local organisations and institutions can steer people towards a personal connection to sustainability issues which is not easy to engender in the more impersonal relations between individual and state (McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; UK Government, 2005). This perspective is problematic for the reasons which are discussed in
relation to instrumentalism above. In addition, such an instrumental perspective fails to
recognise that community activities on sustainability can cover the whole gamut of voluntary
action including anti-capitalist initiatives which directly oppose governmental objectives
(McCarthy, 2005).

A second perspective here relates to the idea of community as an opportunity for re-
localisation of action and understanding of sustainability. This idea is also apparent in research
and practice on sustainability (McCarthy, 2005; Hopkins, 2008). Here, re-localisation is seen as
a means of bypassing state and/or market processes that are seen to have failed. McCarthy
presents a useful analysis here, pointing out the similarities between neo-liberal and grassroots
discourses on community forestry in the US (McCarthy, 2005). These two seemingly opposed
political discourses share a common belief that community is more competent than government
in management of resources. In particular, both neo-liberal and grassroots discourses suggest
that the role of the state should be diminished in favour of the less politically divided
community, with neo-liberals in particular equating weak states with strong markets and strong
civil society. The transition towns initiative is a practical example of the idea of re-localisation,
with its conviction that “if we wait for the governments, it’ll be too little, too late” (Transition
Towns Network, 2008). Another aspect of this argument is a proposal that the environmental
movement can benefit from people’s local attachments:

... greens should mobilise the attachments which many feel to their immediate
locale, neighbourhood or community, whilst allowing for individuals’ need to
transcend these in different ways and move meaningfully between their various
commitments. (Kenny, 1996, pp. 29-30)

Kenny, while recognising that communities can be oppressive places, sees a
reconnection with the local as an essential part of mobilising the environmental movement.

The third perspective relates to the body of literature on sustainability and social capital
(Carr, 2000; Rydin and Pennington, 2000; Evans et al., 2004). Social capital, a broad concept, is
generally taken in this literature to refer to the network of relationships between people,
sometimes connecting to ideas of trust and reciprocity. Crucially, however, there is also an
implication in some sources that social capital is connected to the capacity of communities to act.
Evans and colleagues, for instance, use social capital to mean the ways in which a community
builds capacity for action: through increased and strengthened network connections between
individuals (Evans et al., 2004). Writing in the community development literature, Murray
further elaborates on this to outline the prerequisites for social capital:

... building social capital rests on a foundation of three requirements: (1) a
sense of hope by citizens that solutions are possible; (2) sufficient opportunities
for engagement by those with the necessary motivation and skills; and (3) opportunities to nurture community service life-skills (Murray, 2000, pp. 100-101)

I would reframe Murray’s ‘opportunities’ as ‘community capacity’ for action, given that they reach beyond just ‘social’ capital. Back in the sustainability literature Newman and Dale claim that building ‘agency’ is the basis for social capital (by agency they mean the capacity for individuals to act) (Newman and Dale, 2005). Again, it seems that limiting a discussion of capacity to the ‘social’ is rather restrictive. Indeed, many other ‘capacities’ could be called forth here. In their empirical work on community waste initiatives in several neighbourhoods around Bristol in the UK, for instance, Robbins and Rowe found that community capacity relates to resource availability, which they claim is lower in places experiencing poverty and exclusion (Robbins and Rowe, 2002). In a discussion of community regeneration, Healey and colleagues talk of the need to build institutional capacity which they conceptualise as the strength of civil society as well as the presence of a common purpose and the willingness to form coalitions to achieve that purpose (Healey et al., 2003). In the extensive literature on decision-making, capacity building refers to the act of getting people to engage in democratic processes (Warburton, 1998). As such, my term ‘community capacity’ is a more useful concept here than social capital, and adds an interesting angle to the understanding of community with relation to sustainability.

The fourth perspective mobilises transitions theory to explain the role of community in sustainability. Seyfang and Smith characterise community action as a niche of innovative practice (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). In their conception of community action on sustainability, community represents an opportunity to experiment with new practices and norms which may then become accepted more generally in society. While this is a useful model of development to aspire to, the authors themselves recognise that it is also problematic, given that: “dominant individualist and consumerist lifestyle aspirations run counter to community collectivism” (ibid., p. 599). Seyfang and Smith characterise community initiatives as ‘alternative’ to the mainstream, and, as such, unlikely to be easily taken on by the rest of population (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Progression from a niche to more general acceptance could be dependent on the ‘community capacity’ for change identified above. The links that Seyfang draws in other work between sustainable consumption and community action here are also useful (Seyfang, 2009). Seyfang’s defined indicators of sustainable consumption, for instance, include localisation, community building, collective action, and building new infrastructures of provision (ibid.). In effect, Seyfang defines community sustainability as people living low-impact lifestyles within cohesive communities.
A fifth perspective on the role of community in sustainability stems from the substantial literature on participation in decision-making. This area includes research on environmental justice in communities (Agyeman, 2005), research on deliberative decision making in communities (Meadowcroft, 2004) and research on the role of the grassroots in regeneration (Roberts, 2007). In discussing civic environmentalism in this context, Agyeman proposes two models of public participation: the 'information deficit model' (which relates to the attitude-behaviour paradigm outlined in 2.2.1) and 'deliberative and inclusionary processes and procedures'. Agyeman connects the latter with what he terms broad civic environmentalism, a perspective which:

...stresses the interdependency of contemporary environmental, social and economic issues that are the focus of sustainable communities and calls for a civic renewal and power sharing between communities and local governments with new forms of public participation to create innovative solutions. (Agyeman, 2003, p. 347)

Here, community has a role in sustainability as a solution to a variety of issues (environmental, social and economic) and as an arena for participation in that solution. In a sense Agyeman paints a picture of community where power is shared with residents, and they are therefore engaged in decision-making on sustainability. It is not too big a step from such a concept of civic environmentalism, to also anticipate some enhanced participation in sustainability practices as a by-product of such inclusive governance. Certainly this is implied by contrast with the information-deficit model. Evidence for such a potential outcome has not been reported, but participants in deliberation processes do report being happier with the end outcome than those who do not participate (Meadowcroft, 2004).

It is clear that there are multiple perspectives on the role of community governance for sustainability practices from the sources discussed above, drawn from a range of sustainability literatures. These are a disparate group of ideas which will be drawn on in theoretical work in Chapter 8. I would like to round up this section by drawing out links between community development and sustainable development. Cannan points out that the two movements have something in common: both attempt to work against the individualistic values of consumerism (Cannan, 2000). Cannan sees a crucial learning function for environment in community development:

Because community development specialises in mobilising people in the interests of social justice and in developing social relationships based on cooperation rather than individualism it should have a central role in the processes of confronting the environmental crisis, and in designing more sustainable
futures which place people centre-stage without divorcing them from their (ecological) environment. (Cannan, 2000, p. 367)

This is a useful thought to end this part of the literature review. I hope that in addressing community in the context of sustainability this thesis begins the learning process that Cannan proposes.

### 2.3.3 Volunteering in community

The issue of volunteering is approached by several disciplines including sociology, psychology, and marketing. It is also a major topic of interest for national governments, and the UK government is no exception here. In order to comprehend the nature of participant involvement in community-based organisations that are working on sustainability projects, a few key questions needed to be asked of the volunteering literature. Firstly, it is useful to establish who volunteers; secondly, why they volunteer, and finally what issues arise in the process of volunteering. These three topics are covered in the following section.

In his book on the Voluntary Sector, Kendall argues that one of the weaknesses of the sector is what he calls the ‘particularism’ of volunteers: in other words their tendency to be drawn from the same demographic (Kendall, 2003). This demographic is white, middle-class, and female, and Kendall evidences this with statistical data from the 1990s (ibid.). Empirical work on community groups has also shown that community volunteers come mostly from the middle classes (Williams, 2005). More recent statistical data continues to support the fact that some types of people are more likely to volunteer than others, although the exact nature of the volunteering population is not always clear cut (Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007).

So what are the connections between age, gender, education and volunteering? Recent surveys of formal volunteering have suggested that there are peaks in volunteering activity at certain ages. One source notes a peak at ages 35-44 and 55-64 (Cabinet Office, 2007), and another 16-19 and 35-74 (Kitchen et al., 2006). Time use survey data suggests that people over 45 volunteer more, with 4% of the 45-64 age group and 5% of the 65+ age group volunteering on any given day (Ruston, 2000). The Cabinet Office source also gives detailed data for regular formal volunteers (those volunteering once a month or more). This data is less differentiated, although there are peaks in regular formal volunteering for age groups of 16-24 and 55-65+. While there are some contradictions here, survey data suggests rather low participation in volunteering in the 20s and 30s age group, and high participation among the very young, and those over about 45. These surveys also suggest that women are slightly more likely to volunteer than men, although this difference is rather marginal in formal volunteering (Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007). Kitchen et al. report that 27% of men volunteer formally on a
regular basis, next to 31% of women. The level of formal volunteering that an individual engages in is also found to be positively related to their level of education, with those holding degree-level or higher education substantially more likely to volunteer than those with no qualifications (41% of those with higher education as opposed to 16% of those with no qualifications among regular formal volunteers) (Kitchen et al., 2006). National survey data on volunteering finds that levels of regular volunteering do not vary significantly by employment status (Cabinet Office, 2007). The one exception to this is for sick or disabled people out of work, only 17% of whom are involved in regular formal volunteering (ibid.).

Motivations for volunteering have been a preoccupation of this literature. The consensus here is that people volunteer for lots of reasons, and altruism (perhaps the reason that first comes to mind) is only one (Snyder and Omoto, 2001; Bussell and Forbes, 2002). Snyder and Omoto note that offering one’s services to community:

… rewards volunteers by promoting community spirit, offering evidence of people’s kindness, and commitment to others, by increasing feelings of helpfulness and self worth, by providing opportunities to develop and exercise one's skills and by actually improving physical health. (Snyder and Omoto, 2001, p. 128)

Snyder and Omoto also claim that people volunteer to fulfil different psychological functions according to their particular needs. Writing from a policy perspective, Chanan points out that despite the tendency for the state to focus on community involvement in decision-making, this is not a central motivation for volunteering. As he puts it: “Most [community] activity is created … in order for people to share interests, make friends, help others, entertain, 'give something back to society'.” (Chanan, 2003, part 1.3). In a review of the literature on benefits and costs associated with volunteering, Chinman and Wandersman found that the more a volunteer participates in a group, the more benefits they report experiencing (Chinman and Wandersman, 1999). Most important benefits seem to be normative and social benefits.

Negative issues that arise in studies of volunteering also deserve attention here. MacNeela notes a series of challenges of volunteering, relating either to the individual volunteer or to the organisation offering a volunteering opportunity (MacNeela, 2008). Challenges which can derail a volunteering placement include: life changes or changes in 'home environment' of the volunteer, lack of support from the organisation leading to burn out, too much responsibility placed on a volunteer’s shoulders, the work being either too demanding or not demanding enough, and ethical questions of 'is it right for a volunteer to do this job' (ibid.). Some of the negative aspects may come down to the status of volunteers in comparison to employees. Many formal volunteers will work alongside paid members of staff, but the same rules of service
cannot apply. Pearce categorises this into three key differences: jobs being organised differently (for instance volunteers tend only to have links with one person rather than a network throughout the whole organisation), volunteers not being paid (and as such being less behaviourally committed) and volunteers being independent within the workplace (and as such there being less carrots or sticks to control them) (Pearce, 1993). The disparity between employee and volunteer can lead to conflict in a working relationship, for instance, when 'freedom of action' on behalf of the volunteer is experienced as 'unreliability' by the organiser (ibid.). Chinman and Wandersman also found a link between costs of volunteering and level of participation although a more complex one (Chinman and Wandersman, 1999). Volunteers reporting negative aspects (costs) are sometimes regular volunteers, and sometimes infrequently involved. The authors posit that those regularly involved volunteers experience a combination of high costs and high benefits, thus, although it may appear illogical that these people should carry on volunteering, their overall perception of the situation is likely to be that costs outweigh benefits (ibid.).

2.4 Influence of community-based organisations on sustainability practice

In this section I offer a summary of the literature which directly deals with the influence of community-based organisations on sustainability practice. I have published an earlier version of this section elsewhere (Middlemiss, 2008). The directly related literature is presented in the form of a model of the impact of sustainability projects run by community-based organisations on their participants. The three sensitizing concepts of context, mechanism and outcome are used to structure the summary of the literature, these are described in more detail in 3.3.2 (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The model consists of evidence from the literature about which contexts encourage practice change, how mechanisms act on individuals in these contexts, and which outcomes such projects can stimulate. The body of literature used to construct the model is that which specifically refers to the influence of community-based organisations on sustainability practice in a developed country context. Sources from this literature were analysed for theoretical statements on the contexts and mechanisms that seem to promote more sustainable practices, and for evidence of the outcomes of community-based sustainability projects. This amounted to a codification of the literature using the principles of qualitative analysis. This analysis included both empirical and theoretical work, and was limited to work in the English language.

Some comment on the quality and quantity of the evidence-base dealing directly with the influence of community-based organisations on individual sustainability is necessary here. In
the literature search I uncovered rather limited empirical research (defined here as research which reports empirical evidence first hand) directly covering the impact of community-based activities on the sustainability of individuals, a total of fifteen sources in the English language (Mosler, 1993; Environ, 1996; Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Georg, 1999; Macgillivray and Walker, 2000; Hobson, 2001; Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002; Michaelis, 2002; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Staats et al., 2004; Howard et al., 2005; Luckin and Sharp, 2005; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006; Alexander et al., 2007). Research in this area is highly varied, originating from multiple academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, economics) and from the policy literature. The sources tend to touch on issues related to the research focus, such as group-led behavioural change, or social capital and environmental behaviour, rather than answering the specific questions of this research project. Most sources elaborate case studies of community-based organisations attempting to instigate change. These range from an in-depth case study of individuals’ experiences of Global Action Plan’s (GAP) Ecoteams programme (Maiteny, 2002) to broader studies of a series of LA21 related projects incorporating social and environmental goals (Church and Elster, 2002). The Ecoteams programme is rather heavily drawn upon, being used as a case study by five out of the fifteen sources here (Georg, 1999; Hobson, 2001; Maiteny, 2002; Staats et al., 2004; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). The methods used in this body of research are extremely varied, ranging from interviews, to surveys and in one case to experimental simulation of a group activity (Mosler, 1993). Given the wide variability of the evidence base, the rather limited numbers of empirical sources, the high profile of the Ecoteams programme as a case study and the marginality of the specific research area within the existing literature, the model presented below only represents a starting point in this area. Indeed, one of the objectives of this thesis is to add to this empirical evidence-base in a more consistent and coordinated way.

Two theoretical papers are drawn on here which deal directly with the influence of groups in the community on individual sustainability. Jackson and Marks and Pennington and Rydin discuss the trade-offs that individuals may make in choosing to get involved in activities in the community and its effects on their pro-environmental behaviour (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). This ties in with ideas of wellbeing in sustainable consumption discussed above (see 2.2.3).

The model of the influence of community-based organisations on individual sustainability is presented in the following three sections. It consists of lists of contextual factors (Table 2.1) and mechanisms (Table 2.2) which seem to promote sustainability practice and other related outcomes (Table 2.3). The discussion underneath each list offers further elaboration of
points made, as well as comparisons with findings in the more general literature on sustainable consumption.

### 2.4.1 Contexts which stimulate practice change

Table 2.1 lists the contextual factors, identified from the empirical literature in this area, that influence individuals to take on more sustainable practices in community-based sustainability projects. Contextual factors are further classified according to the specific entity to which they apply (individual, activity, community-based organisation or community) according to the principle that an individual’s activities are ‘embedded’ within society (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Contextual factors are categorised by a reference (C1-C12) for ease of identification.

Many of the contextual factors listed in Table 2.1 are similar to those that arise in the general literature on sustainable consumption. For instance, the first contextual factor listed here (C1) states that a positive attitude to the environment will help an individual’s adoption of sustainable practices (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002). This has been recognised in theoretical models of many of the disciplines concerned with sustainable consumption (Jackson, 2005). The recognition in the literature that pro-environmental attitude can influence behaviour, is coupled with an understanding that this is not a simple causal relationship (as explained with the concept of the ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ above). Equally it is likely that some kind of knowledge (how to make changes) or norm enforcing (why to make changes) mechanism should be in place for pro-environmental attitudes to affect behaviour (Jensen, 2002).

These specific problems with pro-environmental attitude in the model as it now stands, uncover a more general concern. From the current literature it is difficult to uncover which of these contextual factors are fundamental to the success of sustainability projects run by community-based organisations. It is possible to imagine a project in which all of these contextual factors exist, but where no practice change is seen. As it currently stands, therefore, this list of contextual factors influencing change has limited application. A greater appreciation of the relative effect of different individual and community contexts is one of the objectives of this research, which is addressed in full in Chapter 8 (see 8.2).

There are also some dangers inherent in the creation of such a list of contextual factors affecting practice change. It seems likely that different types of people will be affected in different ways by such projects and it would be unwise to exclude or include participants based on their contexts, particularly at this early stage. The list of contexts in Table 2.1 is unlikely to be complete. Its construction from a group of disparate case studies, which are rather dominated by the GAP Ecoteams case, means that some important factors may have been neglected. The contextual factors that make individuals more likely to take part (C1 pro-environmental attitude
Table 2.1 Contextual factors identified in the literature which are found to stimulate change in sustainability practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of...</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Individual    | C1 The individual has a broadly positive attitude to the environment and an understanding of the environmental problem concerned. (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002)  
                 C2 The individual brings skills to the activity (including reflexivity, knowledge, enthusiasm, negotiation, motivation, curiosity). (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Robbins and Rowe, 2002) |
| Activity      | C3 The practice in question is culturally and socially acceptable. (Georg, 1999; Hobson, 2001)  
                 C4 The practice in question is publicly visible (Mosler, 1993) and supported by the community-based organisation. (Sustainable Development Commission, 2006)  
                 C5 The activity is determined and led by the group, concerns an issue deemed important locally and is approached in a positive light. (Church and Elster, 2002; Michaelis, 2002; Alexander et al., 2007)  
                 C6 The activity is well funded and competently managed. (Church and Elster, 2002; Staats et al., 2004)  
                 C7 The activity has goals in both social and environmental areas. (Environ, 1996; Howard et al., 2005; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006) |
| Community-based organisation | C8 The group promotes strong social interaction and mutual trust between group members. (Mosler, 1993; Staats et al., 2004)  
                               C9 The group’s purpose is connected in some way to the environment. (Michaelis, 2002)  
                               C10 A project worker is available with time to start up the activity (Environ, 1996) or a small number of highly-motivated individuals are available to drive the group. (Alexander et al., 2007) |
| Community     | C11 The community is cohesive and there is a strong sense of identity. (Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Luckin and Sharp, 2005)  
                 C12 Facilities are provided in the community to aid the adoption of practices. (Maiteny, 2002)  
                 C13 Other organisations are prepared to partner with the community-based organisation to effect change. (Alexander et al., 2007) |

and environmental understanding, and C2 skills), paint a rather one-dimensional picture of the types of participant in sustainability projects run by community-based organisations, perhaps influenced by the GAP project where participants tend to be wealthier, more professional and have more pro-environmental attitudes than the general population (Harland, 2001). Such a participant profile is indeed not a universal feature of community-based sustainability projects (see Church and Elster, 2002) which are sometimes deliberately established to stimulate a less engaged community into sustainability practices, or to motivate a disadvantaged community to
care for their neighbourhood environment. Uncovering the influential contextual factors in different types of project, and for different types of participant is an important aim of the empirical research in this thesis (research questions 1 and 2).

Initial thoughts about combinations of factors that might stimulate specific changes are emerging from this analysis. Some of the contextual factors relating to the project activity listed here are likely to conflict with the kinds of solutions necessary to solve environmental problems. For instance, many sustainability practices are not ‘culturally and socially acceptable’ (C3) or ‘publicly visible’ (C4) and environmental problems that are ‘deemed important locally’ (C5) may not be those which really make a difference to an individual’s sustainability. This will of course depend on the nature of the community-based organisation. If, for instance, the organisation’s purpose is in some way connected to the environment (C9), some sustainability practices could be socially or culturally acceptable (C3). This is likely to be the case with GAP’s Ecoteams projects, where groups are set up explicitly to reduce the participants’ environmental impact. In effect the nature of a particular group could result in the establishment of a norm of sustainability practice.

### 2.4.2 Mechanisms which stimulate practice change

Table 2.2 lists the mechanisms, or the means by which individuals decide to take on sustainability practices, which seem to be stimulating change in the individuals involved in community-based sustainability projects. Six such mechanisms have been identified from this review of the literature.

Group-based deliberation (M1) came out strongly in the literature as a mechanism for change. The idea that talking through an environmental problem and associated solutions within a group can help to inform and motivate an individual to change practice is also present in the more general literature on sustainable consumption (Gardner and Stern, 2002; Geller, 2002; Holdsworth and Steedman, 2005). It may be that such deliberation raises individuals’ awareness of the impact that their own practices have on the environment, turning ‘bad’ habits into a conscious effort to take on sustainability practices (Geller, 2002). Geller sees this as a progression from an individual’s ‘unconscious incompetence’ regarding sustainability practices, through their realisation that what they do is incompetent, to a decision to take on more ‘competent’ practices. Eventually the individual may become ‘unconsciously competent’, having absorbed good habits into everyday practice (ibid.). The deliberation mechanism also links with the concept of ‘social learning’ from the education for sustainability literature. Jensen, for instance, believes that individuals need information on how to change, as well as a vision for the future in order to fully engage in sustainable practices (Jensen, 2002). It does seem from the
literature that community-based change projects provide individuals with a forum in which information is shared, and in which a vision can be constructed as part of this ‘deliberation’ mechanism. Not all projects place such an emphasis on deliberation as a mechanism for change, however. Many of the references that emphasised group-based deliberation used Global Action Plan’s Ecoteams as a case study, for which such deliberation is a central tenet (Georg, 1999; Hobson, 2001; Staats et al., 2004). Given that the cases currently in the literature are of a limited range, further research will need to explore the relative importance of this mechanism.

Table 2.2 Mechanisms identified in the literature which are found to stimulate change in sustainability practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>M1 The group provides opportunity for deliberation on the specific environmental problem and potential solutions to it. This includes opportunities for personal reflection, feedback from others on choices made, developing shared understandings, questioning each others’ decisions, and exchanging information and ideas. (Environ, 1996; Georg, 1999; Hobson, 2001; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Staats et al., 2004; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard setting</td>
<td>M2 The group develops standards which individuals then strive to meet and maintain. (Georg, 1999; Staats et al., 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>M3 Individuals within the group support each other in reaching a common goal. (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Georg, 1999; Staats et al., 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>M4 Working in a group dispels the feeling that individual actions are a ‘drop in the ocean’ and lends meaning to activities. (Maiteny, 2002; Michaelis, 2002; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits exchange</td>
<td>M5 The activity concerned represents an exchange of benefits for the individual: swapping over-consumption for social capital. (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits recognition</td>
<td>M6 The group nature of the activity concerned is understood to result in social, personal, financial or material gain for the individual. (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Hobson, 2001; Luckin and Sharp, 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The standard setting (M2) and social support (M3) mechanisms are connected to the presence of social activity within the group and its effects on the individuals concerned. The standard setting mechanism represents the emergence of a social norm from group interaction, which is then developed and enforced mutually (Georg, 1999). The social support mechanism is a ‘positive motivational’ technique (De Young, 1993) which focuses on the group as an enabling force allowing people to establish relationships with like-minded others. This mechanism can be the motivation for people to be involved in such projects. For instance, Stocker and Barnett found that many people joined community garden projects “looking for companionship among kindred spirits with a shared goal” (Stocker and Barnett, 1998, p.180). It is also suggested here
that being involved socially can result in changes to sustainability practice. Staats and Harland *et al.*’s study of participants of the GAP Ecoteams project found that the more socially engaged participants were in the process, the more likely they were to take on pro-environmental behaviour, irrespective of their previous habits (Staats *et al.*, 2004). Whether this is influenced by standard setting or social support mechanisms, or a combination of both is unclear.

The meaning mechanism (M4) emphasises the significance of individual and group actions in contributing to sustainability. As Maiteny explains, it shows the greater significance of small individual actions by bringing like-minded people together to act (Maiteny, 2002). Some projects run by community-based organisations make use of this mechanism in more explicit ways. The GAP Ecoteams project, for instance, gathers data on all individual participants and aggregates energy and waste reduction figures on its website (Global Action Plan, 2006). The mechanism of ‘meaning’ is interpreted more broadly where a community-based organisation such as a school or place of worship incorporates the practice change programme into its own specific purpose or value set. In Michaelis’s study of his own Quaker meeting in Oxford, the ‘meaning’ stems from the group’s joint interpretation of how they should live out their values as Friends (Michaelis, 2002). Meaning is also accorded great importance in the broader literature in this area:

> It is asking too much of the consumer to adopt a green lifestyle unless there is a social context which gives green consumption greater meaning. (Burgess *et al.*, 2003, p. 285)

Perhaps some of the spaces created by community-based organisations, such as Ecoteams, or the Quaker meetings are providing such a meaningful ‘social context’ as referred to by Burgess.

The benefits exchange (M5) and benefits recognition (M6) mechanisms listed here are related. The idea of ‘benefits exchange’ comes from theoretical work by Jackson and Marks and by Pennington and Rydin on the motivations for joining group activities (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). As was discussed in 2.2.3 above, Jackson and Marks characterise the increase in consumption seen over the past 50 years as an attempt to satisfy unfulfilled non-material needs (such as social, moral and growth needs) with material goods (Jackson and Marks, 1999). They propose that activities fulfilling non-material needs (such as socialising and acting within the community) could provide quality of life improvements for an individual. The work of Pennington and Rydin on local environmental governance posits a similar link between social improvements and pro-environmental behaviour (Pennington and Rydin, 2000). They see building social capital as a way of changing patterns of incentive associated with environmental collective action problems. In other words, social capital could
have the potential to produce individual benefits to compensate for the individual costs associated with sustainability practices. Such a trade-off between consumption and community has yet to be observed empirically, but is one possibility put to the test in this thesis. The sixth mechanism ‘benefits recognition’ has been reported in empirical work (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Hobson, 2001; Luckin and Sharp, 2005). Sometimes involvement in projects run by community-based organisations on sustainability can have important side-benefits for the individuals involved (in terms of financial savings, increased social activity, access to green space, or even vegetables in the case of a community garden). If these benefits are perceived by participants, they may see membership, and participation in a particular activity on sustainability, as a means for accessing certain benefits. Evidently not all such activities will result in benefits to the participant, but where they do this mechanism could be of use.

2.4.3 Outcomes of community-based sustainability projects

Reported outcomes of sustainability projects run by community-based organisations are potentially numerous and varied in the literature. Indeed, the most evident feature of outcomes is their diversity, with most sources listing multiple impacts on those involved, on the environment, on the community-based organisation and on the community at large. Most of the projects discussed in the literature have multiple goals, often deliberately targeting both a sustainability practice and social issues within the community, and as such record multiple outcomes. In a recent study of a series community-based energy projects, a similar diversity of outcomes was found (Walker et al., 2006). This seems to be one of the benefits of community-based organisations being involved in sustainability projects, as many other sustainable consumption measures are unlikely to result in the range of beneficial effects seen here. In community-based projects, when a mechanism such as that of benefits exchange (see M5 in Table 2.2) is in place, the presence of secondary outcomes may be fundamental to the functioning of the group. As such, it is important that such outcomes are included in the study. Table 2.3 lists the outcomes of community-based sustainability projects given in the literature, classified by the practice, institution or individual which the outcome affects.

If the use of community-based organisations to increase sustainability practice is seen instrumentally, the first outcome listed here is of greatest significance. Not all sources agree on the level of impact that these projects can have on environmental problems (Church and Elster, 2002; Staats et al., 2004). A major longitudinal study by Staats et al (ibid.) on the Ecoteams programme has found considerable and lasting changes in people’s practices. Presumably different projects have different impacts according to the specific practice(s) targeted, and the
nature of the contexts and mechanisms of the case. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Table 2.3 Outcomes of sustainability projects run by community-based organisations reported in the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome for:</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability practice</td>
<td><strong>O1</strong> Positive environmental effects from individuals involved, including (maintained) practice change (Staats et al., 2004), spill over to other practices (Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002). Overall environmental effects are disputed. (Church and Elster, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>O2</strong> Attitudinal effects: pro-environmental attitude change (Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002), engaging previously uninformed people with environment and sustainability issues. (Church and Elster, 2002; Staats et al., 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>O3</strong> Education on environmental issues and possibility for changes in practice (Stocker and Barnett, 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td><strong>O4</strong> Strengthened social connections within the group concerned, and connection with the local community. (Environ, 1996; Macgillivray and Walker, 2000; Church and Elster, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>O5</strong> Increased skills, confidence and self-worth. (Maiteny, 2002; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Howard et al., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>O6</strong> Improved physical and mental health. (Howard et al., 2005; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based organisation</td>
<td><strong>O7</strong> Group work leads to creative and innovative solutions that people are not able to develop alone. (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Michaelis, 2002; Jackson and Michaelis, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>O8</strong> Potential for stress and breakdown of group relations. (Howard et al., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td><strong>O9</strong> Increased efficacy in both community and democratic participation, and increased likelihood of political engagement. (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Hobson, 2001; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Alexander et al., 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.4 Commentary on the existing evidence on the influence of community-based organisations on sustainability practice

The model above details the contextual factors, the mechanisms and the outcomes that have been observed at work in this research area with some comment on further evidence for similar features in the broader literature on sustainable consumption. This commentary takes a step back to consider how this model works as a whole, and how that compares with the broader literature on sustainable consumption.

The most marked feature of the model presented above is the similarity between lists of contexts and outcomes. While the primary outcome of sustainability practices seems to be widely reported, secondary outcomes such as social cohesion, increased skills, and attitude
change conspicuously mirror equivalent contextual factors. Some examples of context and outcome similarities are presented in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Similarities between contexts and outcomes raised in this review of the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1</strong> The individual has a broadly positive attitude to the environment and an understanding of the environmental problem concerned. (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002)</td>
<td><strong>O2</strong> Attitudinal effects: pro-environmental attitude change (Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002), engaging previously uninformed people with environment and sustainability issues. (Church and Elster, 2002; Staats et al., 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C2</strong> The individual brings skills to the activity (including reflexivity, knowledge, enthusiasm, negotiation, motivation, curiosity). (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Robbins and Rowe, 2002)</td>
<td><strong>O5</strong> Increased skills, confidence and self-worth. (Maiteny, 2002; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Howard et al., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C8</strong> The group promotes strong social interaction and mutual trust between group members. (Mosler, 1993; Staats et al., 2004) <strong>C11</strong> The community is cohesive and there is a strong sense of identity. (Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Luckin and Sharp, 2005)</td>
<td><strong>O4</strong> Strengthened social connections within the group concerned, and connection with the local community. (Environ, 1996; Macgillivray and Walker, 2000; Church and Elster, 2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This raises several questions from the existing evidence base. The first question arising from this comparison of contexts and outcomes is whether any secondary changes are occurring at all, alongside the sustainability practice changes noted by some authors. If an individual entering a project is already highly skilled (C2), for instance, he or she is surely less likely to experience an outcome of increased skills (O5 – see second row of Table 2.4). Equally, if the group already promotes social interaction and mutual trust (C8), does that not mean that social connections within the group are less likely to be strengthened (O4 – see third row of Table 2.4)? It seems that the ideal conditions for a sustainability project run by a community-based organisation could also be being measured as outcomes of such projects. A clearer understanding of which particular contexts stimulate which outcomes in such projects will be an important result of this research project. These two issues are dealt with by research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Alternative explanations could exist here. For instance, while some sources suggest that a positive attitude to the environment (C1) will enhance the possibility of an individual altering their practices when involved in a community-based sustainability project (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002), others emphasise the role of these projects in creating pro-environmental attitudes (O2) (Church and Elster, 2002; Staats et al., 2004). It could be the case that these projects work in different ways for different types of people. As such, this thesis explores the
possibility that activities run by community-based organisations to promote individual sustainability have different effects according to the sustainability practice history of the participant. It is possible from the evidence in the literature that there is some kind of multi-layered effect at work here, with community-based organisations acting as a catalyst for change appropriate to particular participants. An important outcome of this literature review, then, is that this thesis must establish the level of engagement, understanding and skill that individuals involved in such community-based projects have on entry, and how this changes through participation (research questions 2 and 3, Chapters 5 and 6).

Turning to the broader literature on sustainable consumption, the model above provides some interesting insights. Concern with the attitude-behaviour gap, which focuses on the difficulties of predicting pro-environmental behaviour (outcome) from pro-environmental attitudes (context), reveals that there is a need to connect outcomes and contexts by means of explanatory mechanisms in this area of research. There has been a tendency to focus on the inputs (or contextual factors) and outputs (or outcomes) of sustainability practice change rather than the means by which outcomes are achieved (mechanisms). For instance, three papers on sustainable consumption focus on contextual factors that induce a particular outcome (sustainability practices) as opposed to attempting to establish the means by which that outcome is reached (Gatersleben and Vlek, 1997; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Barr, 2003). This is partly due to the generalised nature of these models which attempt to discuss all aspects of behavioural change in relation to sustainable consumption. The specific focus of this thesis on the influence of community-based organisations on sustainability practices allows for greater depth in discussions of causal links. In any case, the application of Pawson and Tilley’s evaluation framework to this research topic allows important insights about the means by which people are encouraged to change their practices by requiring exploration of the mechanisms involved (see 3.3.2). This issue is dealt with in research question 5 (Chapter 7).

Where mechanisms are discussed in the theoretical literature on behavioural change, there has been a tendency (especially in certain disciplines) to concentrate on a single mechanism that determines if an individual will take on a practice or not. In rational choice theory, for instance, the maximisation of subjective expected utility is the central mechanism which explains an individual’s actions. From the psychology literature, Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that a behaviour (outcome) and the intention to perform that behaviour (preliminary outcome) is determined by the perceived behavioural control that the individual possesses (mechanism) provided that the correct attitude and social norms are in place (contexts) (Ajzen, 1991). The application of Pawson and Tilley’s evaluation framework
Chapter 2: Community and Sustainability Practice

here, results in a model that accounts for multiple mechanisms which can influence individuals to change in this specific context.

2.5 Conclusions

This literature review has brought up some key issues that are to be resolved in the course of the thesis. At the most basic, section 2.4 on the directly related literature proves a need to provide more structured evidence on the role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices. This is the topic focus of the research questions listed in the introduction to the thesis (1.3), and answered in the results and analysis chapters (Chapters 4-7). Second, the broader relationship between community governance and sustainability is also rather under-researched (section 2.3 above). This issue is dealt with in research questions on capacity for community governance on sustainability (research question 1, Chapter 4) and the nature of the volunteers engaged in this area (research question 2, Chapter 5). These chapters explore the context in which both community-based organisations and their participants’ engage in sustainability projects in the community. Two theoretical insights in the literature which relate to practice theory and the theory connecting consumption with wellbeing also raise questions in this empirical context (see 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). In the outline above I showed that the use of practice theory implies examining interventions for sustainable consumption in a different way, with an emphasis on both structure and agency. This raises the question of how practice theory can be used to address change in sustainable consumption practice, given that previous work in this area focuses on exploring existing practices. Practice theory permeates the rest of this thesis and is reflected in the wording of the research questions, which use practice as central terminology, as well as in the presence of questions which address both structure and agency. It is also explicitly addressed in the discussion chapter where a practice theory of community-based organisations’ interventions is presented (see 8.3). The second theory that raises questions is the work that connects consumption and wellbeing. This relates particularly to the research question about the other effects that these initiatives have on participants (research question 4) and whether that has an impact on sustainability practice adoption. This theory is therefore raised in the results and analysis chapter that relates to research question 4 (see 6.3), and in the discussion chapter (see 8.4).
3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the research design of the thesis and, as such, describe both the logic of the approach to research, and the details of how that logic has been applied. I begin by summarising the philosophical approach to research which I take in this thesis (methodology). I then continue to explain the logic of enquiry that the thesis uses, recognising the influence of four approaches to or strategies of research: induction, evaluation research, case study research and qualitative research. I explain the use of methods in detail, including the nature of data collection and analysis, of my final sample. Finally, I comment on the generalisability and validity of research given the methodology and methods presented. A summary of the different elements of the research design is given in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Summary of research methodology and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Critical realism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Realistic evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Inductive</td>
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<td>Case study</td>
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<td>Qualitative</td>
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<td>Collection methods</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews</td>
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<td>Documentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
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<td>Secondary data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis methods</td>
<td>Coding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Categorising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theory building</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive statistical analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before embarking on the detailed explanation of the research methodology, strategy, approach and methods, it is worth pointing out that the central structuring influence on the thesis stems from Pawson and Tilley’s realistic evaluation method, which I am labelling the ‘strategy’ of my research (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This strategy is explained in more detail under 3.3.2 below. In terms of the chronological evolution of the research plan, the realistic evaluation
strategy was the first step I took in organising the research into a coherent whole. As a result it permeates much of the work that I describe below.

### 3.2 Methodology

The methodology guiding my research is the critical realist approach, which entails a particular ontological and epistemological perspective. In this section I begin by explaining the critical realist perspective, outlining its ontological and epistemological premises. I then explain why this perspective is particularly appropriate for both environmental social sciences in general, and, by extension, for this thesis in particular.

Critical realism has a realist ontology, meaning that it starts from the premise that the world exists in reality regardless of human activity and understanding (Dean et al., 2005). On the other hand, the epistemology of critical realism is more relative: recognising that knowledge and understanding is time and space specific (ibid.). This is usefully summarised by Carolan:

> Yes, the practical, conceptual, and linguistic means we use to grasp the world are historically relative. Our knowledge of the world is (and will always be) mediated and culturally impregnated (to various degrees). But the characteristics and forces that such knowledge references (regardless of verisimilitude) are independent of our means of knowing - that is, they are real. (Carolan, 2005a, p. 4)

The combination of a realist ontology and relativist epistemology espoused by the critical realist approach, means that scientific knowledge is subject to so called ‘fallibility claims’ (Carolan, 2005a). This means that since knowledge and understanding are specific to time and place (relative), representations of reality in the social sciences are constantly revised according to the new and changed circumstances of the investigator and the investigated. Knowledge about the social world is therefore dynamic and should be held up to scrutiny. When knowledge can bear questions about validity, it can be assumed to be fairly close to reality, until some other knowledge more fit for the time and place replaces it.

The ontological perspective of critical realism is further elaborated in the stratification of reality into real, actual and empirical layers (Dean et al., 2005). These three strata of reality reveal the so-called ‘depth’ of critical realism, which essentially relates back to the epistemological and ontological premises on which the methodology is built. Sayer explains these as follows: the ‘real’ is both whatever exists, regardless of whether it is an empirical object or not, and the realm of objects which have certain structures and causal powers (Sayer, 1999). In terms of my thesis the real is represented by the community-based organisations, the projects they run, the individuals involved (structures) and the potential for sustainability projects to influence individuals (causal power). For Sayer the ‘actual’ is “what happens if and when those
[causal] powers are activated” (Sayer, 1999, p. 12). In my thesis the actual refers to the events (or changes in practice) stimulated by the different case studies under consideration as well as the means by which these events come about (mechanisms). Finally, for Sayer, the ‘empirical’ refers to the domain of experience, and, as such, the experience of either real or actual strata (Sayer, 1999). In my thesis the empirical is represented in participants’ experiences of the community-based organisation, the particular project involved and the practice changes that this brought about. The empirical is the stratum that the researcher is able to access directly through interaction with participants of these projects. This empirical stratum forms only part of reality, and allows only indirect access to real and actual strata. As such, because it takes a critical realist perspective, my work can claim only to provide a mediated view of reality, which is constructed through interaction with multiple empirical sources.

Both the study of sociology, and that of the environmental social sciences, have been strongly affected by discussions of realism and relativity because both extremes are represented under its disciplinary banner. Many authors have agreed that the dichotomies of positivism and relativism, structure and agency orientation, and qualitative and quantitative methodologies within the social sciences are unproductive (Giddens, 1984; Gandy, 1996; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Mason, 2006). This frustration with dualist debates, has led to various propositions for compromise, one of which is exemplified by the critical realist approach (Bhaskar, 1975). Critical realism attempts to provide a defined middle way, explicitly avoiding the extremes of many of the debates in social sciences research. This is a particularly appropriate response to studying problems that include both human and natural elements. As Carolan puts it:

A critical realist naturalism is one which attends to both the distinctiveness of humans as meaning-producing animals (what hermeneutics stresses) and human's necessary and specific physicality and their necessary interaction with non-human nature (what positivism stresses). (Carolan, 2005b, p. 2)

Given that in this thesis I deal with a human response (sustainable consumption) to a specific set of physical problems in nature (resource depletion, and effects from emissions and waste) this middle way seems particularly appropriate. In the following paragraphs I will discuss various reasons for using a critical realist approach within a study that deals with environmental problems from a human perspective.

Various writers have noted the appropriateness of the critical realist methodological perspective for the environmental social sciences (Gandy, 1996; Woodgate and Redclift, 1998; Carolan, 2005a) and for research in practice or value-based topics (Robson, 2002). The methodology is mainly considered useful because it provides an opportunity to link the realms of nature and society in research. Gandy, commenting on the critical realist approach, explains:
This approach is better suited to the analysis of phenomena which are neither purely object (nature) nor subject (social discourse), but the ‘quasi-objects’ described by Latour (1993) which lie between the opposite epistemological poles frozen into the dichotomy between the natural and social sciences. (Gandy, 1996, p. 35)

Crucially for the environmental social sciences, critical realism is a methodology which reinstates the natural or physical realm as real, thus representing a step back from ontological relativism (postmodernism and post-structuralism). In its core premise that the world is socially constructed, postmodernism includes some uncomfortable implications for the environmental social sciences. Indeed, when the postmodern or poststructuralist agenda is taken to its natural conclusion, the very existence of the world, and indeed of physical phenomena such as ‘sex’ or ‘contaminated water’, is understood as socially constructed, and, as such, not ‘real’ (Carolan, 2005a). Such ontological relativism is unhelpful in environmental research, which tends to deal with both natural and social realms, often simultaneously, and requires acknowledgement of the existence of the material world in order for the problem in society to be recognised (Woodgate and Redclift, 1998). For instance, this thesis investigates the possibility for reducing impact on the physical environment by stimulating change in consumption practices. The importance of changing consumption practices can only be fully understood when we accept that a real physical impact on the world will occur as a result of these changes.

A further important reason for taking a critical realist approach in environmental social sciences, is again related to problems with ontological relativism. If the existence of a physical reality is denied, environmental research loses the ability to discuss environmental oppression and justice. Equally, if all perspectives on the phenomenon in question are given equal weight (as in extreme relativism), there is a risk that the person or group shouting loudest will be heard while those with less prominent voices are overlooked (Carolan, 2005b). As Carolan puts it:

In the end, those who deny the independent existence of a causally efficacious biophysical realm lose all critical purchase to oppressive exercises of power, especially those involving anything physical in nature - from torture, to genital mutilation, to contaminated water and polluted air. (Carolan, 2005a, p. 5)

In order to ensure that the ‘critical’ aspect of environmental social science persists, in other words that environmental social science continues to contribute to our ability to deal fairly with a changing environment, it is essential to believe in the existence of a real world, in which real people experience and produce real environmental effects (Carolan, 2005b). In this thesis, the importance of changing consumption practices is understood within a context of unequal access to resources and unequal production of waste. Broadly speaking, unsustainable
consumption in the global North causes problems that disproportionately affect the global South (Jackson, 2006). Critical realism allows us to recognise this inequality as real.

Another aspect of the critical realist ontology is the acceptance of causal explanation as a goal of research. Relativist research tends to avoid causal explanation in favour of descriptions of specific instances (Gandy, 1996), whereas positivist research deals with linear (or successionist) models of causation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Carolan argues that sociologists have sometimes ignored the natural world altogether in order to avoid engaging in causal research, in particular to avoid the sort of deterministic research favoured by positivists (Carolan, 2005a). I would argue that if we are to conduct research that feeds both meaningfully and critically into attempts to reduce environmental harm, we must attempt causal explanations of how change comes about. The critical realist approach here is to offer generative explanations (which incorporate real, actual and empirical strata), rather than successionist explanations (which remain in the empirical stratum) (Mingers, 2004). Such explanations of causation talk of outcomes within context, thus appreciating the embedded nature of causation, and uncovering in which contexts and for whom change happens. In this thesis, the research questions revolve around the issue of causation in the context of community interventions to influence practice, and, as such, causal explanation is essential. The precise approach to causation is discussed in more detail in the discussion of ‘realistic evaluation’ below (see 3.3.2).

In summary then, this thesis takes a critical realist approach to research, accepting a realist ontology, and relative epistemology. This methodology is particularly appropriate in this research and in the environmental social sciences more generally because: it recognises the reality of environmental damage, and the unfair distribution of the costs and benefits of that damage. It also allows for causal explanation while preserving the importance of context.

### 3.3 Research strategy and approach

Here, I explain the strategy and approach to research under this thesis, including the influence of four major bodies of the methods literature to the overall direction of research. First the research takes an inductive approach to theory, aiming to create new theory in an area where evidence is currently rather limited (3.3.1). Second, evaluation is used as a research strategy or ‘logic of enquiry’ that structures the research by providing a logic of causation, influencing the choice of methods, and providing a set of sensitizing concepts for collection and analysis (3.3.2). Third and fourth, I use case study and qualitative approaches in this thesis, and these are explained, contextualised and justified in turn here (3.3.3 and 3.3.4).
3.3.1 Induction

The research took what is commonly known as an inductive approach. I chose an inductive approach because the research was exploratory and attempted to create new theories to explain the influence of community-based organisations on sustainable practices, rather than testing an existing theory in a deductive way (Blaxter et al., 2001). Theories were generated and iteratively tested during the research process where the main data collection and analysis took the form of five case studies, with each round of collection and analysis happening almost sequentially. This iterative process is a well known approach to qualitative, exploratory research which is attempting to establish theory in a new area (Charmaz, 2005).

Note that not all writers call this process ‘inductive’, and in Blaikie’s rather more subtle characterisation of research strategies this approach would come somewhere between ‘retroduction’ and ‘abduction’ (Blaikie, 2000). Retroduction refers to a research strategy which tries to “discover underlying mechanisms to explain observed regularities” (ibid., p. 101) and which tests evidence for these mechanisms in an iterative way. Abduction is a research strategy which aims “to describe and understand social life in terms of social actors’ motives and accounts” (ibid., p. 101). In this thesis I construct theory using both of these principles: looking for regularities in social actors’ motives and accounts of their involvement in sustainability projects run by community-based organisations. As well as theory emerging from data, some key existing theories did influence the direction of the research. These also emerged as key to the overall argument of the thesis as the analysis developed, with the accounts of social actors tying in to larger social theories. These theories are outlined in the literature review (Chapter 2).

3.3.2 Evaluation as research strategy

In this thesis I am using an evaluation research strategy. Since the thesis attempts to uncover the activities, characteristics and outcomes of a particular type of intervention (community-based sustainability projects) in order to improve the understanding of such interventions, evaluation research seems to be an appropriate strategy. Weiss sees a key purpose of evaluation as 'understanding social intervention', using evaluation as an opportunity to develop theory about a type of intervention which is challenged by the ever-changing nature of conditions (Weiss 1998). Theory development was my objective here, in particular I intended to construct a understanding of how community-based interventions affect participants’ sustainability practice. I base my research on the ‘realistic evaluation’ approach of the social policy writers Pawson and Tilley (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). As such, I begin this section by outlining the realistic evaluation approach in more detail, and then contrast it to other models of evaluation. I then explain how I use it in my research.
3.3.2.1 Realistic Evaluation

Pawson and Tilley start from the premise that an intervention can have different effects according to the particular individual, institutions and infrastructure, and the options available to the actors involved. According to this logic the question to be considered in evaluating a particular intervention is ‘what works, for whom, under which circumstances?’, rather than the more common (and simplistic) ‘what works?’. This approach is further explained as follows:

… programmes work (have successful 'outcomes') only in so far as they introduce the appropriate ideas and opportunities ('mechanisms') to groups in the appropriate social and cultural conditions ('contexts'). (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 57)

In taking this position, Pawson and Tilley follow a generative model of causation which envisages outcomes occurring as a result of multiple embedded factors. The model is non-linear, and, as such, avoids successionist explanation in which attempts are made to prove that one variable is positively or negatively linked to another. Instead it promotes an understanding of causation, which explains the outcome of an intervention in terms of the mechanisms that triggered change and the context in which change was able to occur (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Such a model of causation moves away from theorising purely about observed data associations (as in successionist causation) to constructing causal explanations about the interacting mechanisms that underlie the empirical world (Mingers, 2004). The advantage of this generative model over the successionist model is its recognition of the ‘open systems’ nature of social reality (Robson, 2002). This means that social phenomena are understood to rarely operate according to strict rules, and strong relations between variables, but can better be described in terms of tendencies and probabilities (ibid.). Generative explanations of causality are different to predictions in that they aspire to explain how an outcome comes about, rather than predicting outcomes (Elster, 1989). The generative causal model that governs Pawson and Tilley’s work is represented in diagrammatic form in Figure 3.1.

The concepts of context, mechanism and outcome are therefore used by Pawson and Tilley to form theories of change. In their view, an outcome occurs as a result of a combination of contextual factors existing in the specific instance of a programme’s implementation, and mechanisms stimulated within those contexts. The three concepts are defined in more detail as follows:

- The context is: “the prior set of social rules, norms, values and interrelationships … which sets limits on the efficacy of program mechanisms” (ibid., p. 70)
- A mechanism refers to: “how program outputs follow from the stakeholders’ choices (reasoning) and their capacity (resources) to put these into practice” (ibid., p. 66).
An outcome is: “the change in rates which evaluation research will try to discern and explain” (ibid. p. 74).

This type of conceptualisation is not unique to Pawson and Tilley, indeed similar structures exist in work by Strauss and Corbin on grounded theory, who use the terms ‘conditions’, ‘actions and interactions’ and ‘consequences’ in a similar conceptual framework to guide qualitative analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). What is distinctive about Pawson and Tilley’s approach, is the objective of theory creation from these three initial concepts.

Under Pawson and Tilley’s logic, then, an evaluation aims to create a theory of the contexts and mechanisms which influence programme outcomes (Pawson, 1995; Pawson and Tilley, 1997). In their approach, (evaluation) research focuses on the researcher's theory, which is the subject matter of interviews and which the participant can confirm, falsify and refine during the interview. The researcher elicits the interviewees’ ‘folk’ theories to refine their own ‘social science’ theory (Pawson, 1995). In this sense the researcher acts as a 'go-between': "seeking mutual enlightenment with each set of stakeholders” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 207). The end theory is a product of multiple conversations about what is happening in reality, as well as elaboration using the social theories that show best fit to the empirical findings. This is a conception of theory familiar in the evaluation field, where people’s programme theories (understandings of how things work) are often elicited in the early stages of the research (Weiss, 1998). As Pawson explains it:

'Theory' in an evaluation context is a set of propositions about the nature of change envisaged in a programme, as well as hypotheses on how this change is
sustained by the action of particular mechanisms in particular contexts. (Pawson, 1995, p. 18)

Pawson and Tilley also propose building a set of context, mechanism and outcome ‘configurations’ which explain how outcomes are reached in various different contexts and through differing mechanisms as part of theory building (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Under Pawson and Tilley’s evaluation strategy, the concepts of context, mechanism and outcome operate within a stratified society. The context of an individual, therefore, might consist of psychological factors such as the willingness to change, as well as infrastructural factors such as the provision of facilities that allow for a particular practice in her local community. The analysis of contexts and outcomes using multiple institutional layers helps to draw out the ‘embeddedness’ of an individual’s activities within society (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This also means that the authors avoid a simplistic conception of programmes merely targeting individuals, and instead look more broadly at the society which these individuals inhabit and how that affects the way that they are likely to take on specific practices.

Pawson and Tilley’s form of evaluation is only one of a great variety of possible evaluation research forms (Weiss, 1998; Clarke, 1999). Evaluation research, for instance, has a history of interest in experimental or quasi-experimental models. For many years the ‘gold standard’ of evaluation was held to be the Randomised Control Trial, an experimental approach where programmes were delivered to large numbers of people, with control groups who did not experience the intervention (see Rossi and Freeman, 1993 for an explanation of this method). In more recent years, following the emergence of postmodern thinking in the social sciences, other forms of evaluation emerged, including, for instance, participatory evaluation and forms of evaluation which are more reluctant to generalise and which emphasise the differences between interventions in different contexts (Patton, 1997). Just as critical realism fills the gap between positivism and relativism, so does realistic evaluation allow for generalisation, while also taking into account differences in context according to where and how a programme is implemented.

### 3.3.2.2 Evaluation in this research

Pawson and Tilley’s ‘realistic evaluation’, has guided the strategy of my thesis in several ways. First, the logic of the model of evaluation research that Pawson and Tilley propose permeates my research. This includes their model of causation, and, as such, their perception of how change happens in society. In addition, their logic allows me to argue more convincingly for certain research design decisions (methods choice, and lack of control group). Finally the concepts of context, mechanism and outcome are used as a sensitizing framework (or conceptual
framework) for data collection and analysis (Blaikie, 2000; Robson, 2002). This last point is explained in more detail in the discussion of Qualitative analysis below (see 3.4.3).

The model of causation proposed by Pawson and Tilley is outlined above. This model is particularly appropriate for this study as it links causation to both individual agency (mechanisms) and the context of the individual, the intervention and society more broadly (context). This fits very well with the theoretical basis for the research: practice theory (see 2.2.2). Indeed, Pawson and Tilley’s view on how change happens, is also linked strongly with practice theory. In their view research seeks to uncover the choices made by participants that lead to changes in practice, and the contexts in which those choices are enabled to occur. Pawson and Tilley explain this as follows:

… the real engine for change in social programs … is the process of differently resourced subjects making constrained choices amongst the range of opportunities provided. (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 46)

The model of evaluation research that Pawson and Tilley propose therefore results in an ontological assumption that practice change is generated by individual choice framed by the particular institutional context of a community-based organisation.

Pawson and Tilley also take a useful view on methods choice. They argue that the entrenched division between qualitative and quantitative research is unhelpful, and that to provide a new focus on how to choose methods, researchers should be guided by the needs of theory (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). In the social science literature much energy has been expended on discussing the differences between and the relative merits of qualitative or quantitative strategies. Some authors set these up as two opposing paradigms of how to do research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005) although there is an acknowledgement that the distinctions between the two may not be as great as we tend to think (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Rather than entering into this debate, Pawson and Tilley argue that the main driver for methods choice should be how those methods add to the efforts to build theory around the area in question. In my research this has been a useful starting point for choosing methods, and is discussed further below (3.3.3 and 3.3.4).

Pawson and Tilley also offer a particularly compelling argument for non-experimental design (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). One of the prerequisites to success of a voluntary policy or programme such as the one studied here, will be its selection by the individual at which it is aimed. In other words, if an individual volunteers to be involved in a community-based sustainability program, she has already displayed the attributes of a volunteer. Therefore comparing her behaviour with the average non-volunteer would make for an unrigorous comparison. Those that chose to be involved in the project concerned will have taken different
decisions on behaviour as a result of their participation. The object of study here is the decisions that were taken, and the reasons why different choices were made. As such, the study did not set out to compare volunteers with abstainers, but rather volunteers that change behaviour as a result of the project, with those that do not.

3.3.3 Case study approach

While evaluation provides the overarching strategy for this research, within that strategy the research takes a case study approach. The evaluation consists of a series of case studies of community-based organisations attempting to change the practices of their members. Given that this is a relatively new area of research, a small number of cases (five) were explored in detail. This gave scope for generalisation across cases, as well as time to investigate the boundaries of each in detail. In this section I will first summarise some of the main issues arising in the case study literature and explain why I am using a case study approach. Second, I will explain which case studies were used in this research, and what these are cases of. I then explain how cases were chosen, and summarise the variety between cases. Finally I explain how data sources within cases were chosen, and present the timetable of research on the different cases.

3.3.3.1 Case study literature

A case study research approach is one of many potential research approaches that could be taken, and, as such, needs justifying here (Blakie, 2000). In his book on case study research, Yin suggests that such an approach is particularly appropriate when research questions are asking ‘how’ or ‘why’ a phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2003). In other words, research that focuses wholly or partly on process is well suited to case studies as it: "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2003, p. 2). Stake in turn emphasises depth of understanding in his description of the value of this approach: "Case studies are of value in refining theory, suggesting complexities for further investigation as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisability." (Stake, 2005, p.460). Flyvbjerg expands on this by framing case studies as an essential component of learning, alongside ‘rule-based knowledge’:

… human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process and in much theory.(Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223)

In essence, case studies represent a deeper but narrower understanding of human behaviour and processes than ‘rule-based knowledge’ and are therefore an important and complementary strand of understanding. Stake calls the understanding gained from case study
‘experiential knowledge’, an understanding which conveys the experience of the people involved in the case as well as the researcher studying the case (Stake, 2005). Case study research therefore allows a reader to have a ‘vicarious experience’ or an experience in place of someone else (ibid.).

There is, as Stake calls it, an ‘abiding tension’ in case study research between the general and the particular (Stake, 1995). This relates to how the case is used to make generalisations about the phenomenon under study, and reflects a greater tension with the validity of case study research (Blaikie, 2000). The tension is twofold: some authors are concerned that cases are not capable of generalisation (as identified by Yin, 2003), others that the urge to generalise may destroy the integrity of the case. As Stake puts it: "Damage occurs when the commitment to generalise or to theorise runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself." (Stake, 2005, p. 448).

Stake further categorises cases as intrinsic (to gain a better understanding of a particular instance), instrumental (to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon and draw generalisations), and multiple (using several instances to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon) (Stake, 2005). The main distinction here is made between a case used to explore a particular instance (intrinsic), and a case used to exemplify a specific issue (instrumental and multiple) which aims to generalise about a particular phenomena. The means by which case studies can be used to generalise needs further unpacking (Blaikie, 2000).

Generalisation in case studies is a different kind of generalisation than that seen in experimental or survey research. As Yin puts it: "in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalise theories (analytical generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation)" (Yin, 2003, p. 10). In practice this means that researchers engaged in case study research use the particular to explore the general, and in doing so question existing theories. This can be a revealing process, and represents an important contribution to theory. As Flyvbjerg puts it:

… researchers who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies, typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions concepts and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 235)

So while it is clear that something can be learned from case study research, crucially, a case study strategy allows for a certain type of generalisation ‘analytical’ and not another ‘statistical’. As such, the outcome of research of this type is not ‘rule-based knowledge’ as Flyvbjerg calls it, but rather a linking of concepts into process theories based on the observations made of reality. Importantly then, case studies are able to tackle causal explanations for
phenomena, but such causal explanations go beyond the linear models used in survey or experimental research (Yin, 2003). This fits well with the understanding of causal explanation I am using for this thesis (see 3.3.2) and the broader perspective of critical realism (see 3.2).

### 3.3.3.2 Case studies in this research

In this research I followed five case studies of sustainability projects run by community-based organisations aimed at changing participant practice. In Stake’s terminology the case studies I am drawing on are instrumental rather than intrinsic: the idea of studying them is mainly to draw generalisation about the common theme (sustainability interventions by community-based organisations) not to gain a better understanding of a specific case (Stake, 1995). In addition, I have studied multiple cases, all designed to investigate this common phenomenon, offering further validity to generalisations (ibid.). All the cases were existing projects, and they experienced no intervention from me during the research besides the research itself. The five case studies are briefly introduced in Table 3.2. More detail on the cases is given in the discussion of the case study method here, and in case summaries in Chapter 4.

All projects were based in the north of England, or the Midlands, mainly for convenience reasons as I am also located in this area. Since such projects are common throughout the UK, this did not cause any problems in finding cases, as it was relatively easy to find examples of each kind of project in the near vicinity. In addition, this does not reduce the generalisability of the cases, since similar cases can be found across the whole of the UK, and in some instances (Green Gym and Women’s Institute) cases were local instances of larger programmes that took place around the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>A walking bus project designed to reduce the numbers of children being driven to school in Meanwood, a suburb of a large city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>An ecology project which aimed to encourage sustainability practices in the church, church members and the local townsfolk of a market town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>Gardening or conservation projects, set up in deprived areas of cities and aiming to improve health, environmental understanding and community cohesion for participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>A use of the Ecoteams programme to change sustainability practices of members of Women’s Institute groups active in rural areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington Carbon</td>
<td>A project designed to reduce the carbon footprint of Bollington residents, a commuter town in Cheshire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.3.3 Why use a case study approach?

I chose a case study approach for this research for several reasons. Firstly, there was limited research done so far on community-based projects to influence participants’ sustainability practice as discussed in the literature review (see 2.4). This made a research strategy of building large data sets difficult, as given the limited research done in this area it would have been difficult to construct a data collection approach based on existing evidence. The study therefore has an exploratory nature, a feature that is known to be well served by a case study approach (Platt, 1988; Yin, 2003). Secondly, the research questions focus around building theory on the process of change that can be inspired by community-based organisations. This means that the research is trying to establish how and why people are changed by involvement in such processes. Such how and why questions are also considered to be particularly suited to a case study approach (Yin, 2003). This is because they call for a ‘depth’ investigation of the particular circumstances of change (offered by a case study approach), rather than a ‘breadth’ investigation (likely served by a survey approach). Using multiple case studies allowed me to explore a range of intervention types, and thus make more generalisable conclusions on the workings of community-based organisations in enabling individuals to take on new practices (Platt, 1988; Quinn Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 2006). As such, the use of multiple and relatively varied case studies in this research helps to allow a combination of depth of data, as well as generalisability across cases.

3.3.3.4 What are these cases of?

The case studies under this research project represent attempts by community-based organisations to change the sustainability practices of their participants. The ‘unit of analysis’ here, in the first instance, is the attempt to change a sustainability practice (Yin, 2003). For simplicity this is referred to throughout as ‘the project’. Given the focus of the research questions on the participant’s experience, each participant within the case is also of interest. In Yin’s terminology, the participants to be interviewed within each project are ‘embedded units’ of the larger case (Yin, 2003). Equally the community-based organisation itself is an important object of study, given its role in determining and leading the project in question.

Given the relatively limited research on this topic area, it was difficult to grasp the range in nature of such projects as they currently exist, how many and what types of people they would involve, and how people might be affected by such projects. I started the research therefore, by trying to avoid excluding projects, taking the position that they were likely to take very diverse forms. This was designed to ensure that the research was as inclusive as possible, a tactic supported by the literature on exploratory research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In defining the limits to
the kinds of cases that could be included then, I assumed that projects could be very varied in nature. This included assuming that projects could involve anything from very few participants (0-10) to a larger number (up to several hundred) as limited by the numbers of people involved in community-based organisations, and that such participants could be very varied in social and environmental background. I also assumed that the research undertaken to date on how people are affected by community-based sustainability initiatives was likely to be unrepresentative of the full story, given the limited nature of the existing research, in particular the focus on certain cases (see 2.4).

To be more specific about the scope of the case studies in this thesis, I have summarised the following defining characteristics. The case must include:

1. A project;
2. concerning sustainability issues;
3. that is active or recently completed;
4. run by a community-based organisation;
5. involving a group of participants;
6. aimed at changing participant sustainability practices.

These characteristics represent the minimum criteria for a case’s inclusion in the research project. While the characteristics listed restricted the numbers of cases available they did leave room for a great variety of projects to be explored. As such, I give a more detailed description of the rationale for case selection below.

3.3.3.5 Choice of specific cases

Cases were selected from widely varying organisations within the limits of the scope discussed above. This represents an attempt to explore diversity in sampling in order to unravel the causal conditions and mechanisms connected to different outcomes (Platt, 1988; Quinn Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg calls this ‘Maximum variation cases’ which he defines as aiming: “To obtain information about the significance of various circumstances for case process and outcome” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). Such an exploration of diversity is also a feature of comparative research which selects a series of contrasting case studies with similar outcomes in order to unpick the different causal factors in each case, and the similarities and differences between cases (Ragin, 1994). It could also be defined as strategic sampling: sampling designed to encapsulate a relevant range of phenomena or contexts (Mason, 2002). I chose the strategy of diversity in sampling at the start of the project, in order to ensure that at the end any theories that emerged could purport to be generally representative of this kind of intervention. This strategy was further strengthened after a pilot case study, the walking bus at
Meanwood School, which appeared to have some considerable differences to the existing pool of case studies in the literature.

In choosing specific cases I took the realistic evaluation assumption that each case will result in some participants changing the practices targeted by the group, and in other participants not changing (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). As such, it was not necessary to select cases purely according to levels of success in changing participant practice. This would in any case have been difficult, as there is no general measure of group success to refer to. To ensure that each case included at least some individuals that have changed practices, however, it made sense to try to identify ‘best case’ instances where possible. The ‘best cases’ here were those recommended by practitioners in the area, based on their subjective judgement that the case has achieved some success. In addition, ‘best cases’ were those that were believed to be well managed, to ensure that process failures did not complicate the final analysis. In practice this meant that once a project type had been identified, practitioners or senior practitioners were asked to recommend a specific instance in a particular geographical location (North of England) that they thought had been successful.

Given that current research in the area is limited (see 2.4), it was difficult to say from the start which characteristics would affect the outcomes of a sustainability project run by a community-based organisation, and, as such, which variable to use as a means by which to sample for diversity. Presumably, different types of groups or activity would affect different types of individuals in different ways. A means of classifying the different cases had to be determined therefore in order to ensure a wide sample. In order to determine a variable by which to guide sampling, I searched the literature on community-based organisations and other connected terms for an existing typology. Several means of categorisation have been used in the literature, for instance, cases have been categorised by:

- The organisation’s degree of independence from governmental organisations (Alcock and Christensen, 1995; Thake, 2004);
- Who or what benefits from the organisation’s activities (e.g. individual, others, environment) (Alcock et al., 2003);
- The parent sector of the organisation (e.g. education, religious worship, health promotion) (Salamon and Anheier, 1992; Alcock et al., 2003);
- The function of the organisation (e.g. financing, representation, provision of buildings, or culture and recreation, education and research, environment, religion) (Salamon and Anheier, 1992; Alcock et al., 2003);
- The style of the organisation: communitarian (unified and exclusive communities) or civil society (larger, more complex and networked) (Marangudakis, 2002).
The nature of the individual’s participation in the group (instrumental or expressive) (Swaroop and Morenoff, 2006).

Another potential categorisation could be to look at organisations along demographic lines (e.g. size, member backgrounds, number of FTEs). This is a sampling approach commonly taken in qualitative research to try to show representativeness (Mason, 2002).

None of these categorisations were particularly helpful in directing this research. The main reason here is that most of them place the organisation at the centre of the typology rather than the project run by that organisation, or the participant involved in the organisation. Given that my focus is the attempt to change the participant’s sustainability practice through his or her involvement a project, this seems rather inappropriate. Swaroop and Morenoff’s instrumental or expressive categorisation, which refers to the participation of the individual in the group, goes some way towards the kind of definition that could be useful as it places the practice of involvement centrally (Swaroop and Morenoff, 2006). Expressive and instrumental are defined as follows:

Expressive acts are motivated by one’s sense of identity as a ‘neighbour’ and include behaviours such as social exchange with neighbours and participation in groups designed to promote feelings of ‘community’ among residents. Instrumental acts are motivated by the functional and political concerns of neighbourhood residents and include membership in organizations designed to protect community interests, as well as other types of informal problem-solving. (ibid., p. 1668)

In order to make use of these two terms as a sampling tool, I have subdivided each term to include more detailed reasons why an individual might be motivated to join in a sustainability project within a community-based organisation. This subdivision is shown in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3 Further specification of the terms ‘instrumental’ and ‘expressive’ for a case sampling strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Instrumental</strong></th>
<th><strong>Expressive</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need: participants have common need for a resource or service.</td>
<td>Place: participants live in or connect to a common place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest: participants have a specific common interest.</td>
<td>Identity: participants form part of a distinct social group (e.g. demographic).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change: participants see a problem in society and get together to do something about it.</td>
<td>Belief: participants share a common set of beliefs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test if this categorisation was feasible as a sampling tool, I used Leeds City Council’s database of voluntary, community and faith organisations to see if any of the groups listed there
did not fit into the categorisation (Leeds City Council, 2008). While all the groups listed here fit well into my categorisation, this process did bring out a complication with the categorisation system, which is that it is not always clear why participants might want to join a group. For instance, someone might attend church for social reasons (‘identity’ to meet other similar people) rather than for reasons of faith (‘belief’). A categorisation based on anticipating which of these six motivations is the principle one in attracting group members, can still lead to a broad selection of case studies which may incorporate individuals who have different motivations for being involved in each group, however. Table 3.4 gives examples of the case studies in this research which fit into the different motivations for participation. As Table 3.4 shows, five of the six categories established above are represented by one of the cases in this study. The sixth category: ‘change’ is represented by all the groups, as they all attempt to change their participants’ sustainability practices. Table 3.4 also lists other potential cases for each type to give an idea of the range of potential projects about which this thesis is generalising. Note that I do not set out in this research to prove if this sampling tool is representative or not, it is merely an aid to choosing cases in a context where there are few existing frameworks.

**Table 3.4 Example case studies for each motivation for participation, including case studies from this research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Case Study example</th>
<th>Other potential cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>Meanwood School walking bus</td>
<td>Car sharing club, Community Currencies (LETS etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Bollington Carbon Revolution</td>
<td>Local regeneration projects, Local transport campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>Cycling club, Global Action Plan (Ecoteams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Working men’s club, Immigrants’ group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Local Friends of the Earth, Political party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>All of the cases under study</td>
<td>Leeds Cycling Action Group, Rotary club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before I move on, I should mention the presence of the Ecoteams programme in two of the cases in my research (Women’s Institute and Bollington). I pointed out in my literature review that this programme features rather heavily in the literature on this topic, with five of the fifteen sources dealing with my research topic issue examining this programme. As such, it would have made sense to try and avoid using cases that drew on the Ecoteams programme in
my research, to diversify the evidence base. So why have I included cases that use the Ecoteams programme in my research? As I explained above, I looked for best case examples of each type of case study, organised by ‘motivation for participation’ as defined above. Both ‘Identity’ (Women’s Institute) and ‘Place’ (Bollington) case studies were relatively difficult to find, particularly within geographical proximity. Identity projects were rather focused around deprived areas, and I was looking for a more demographically varied case given that I had just completed research on the Green Gym project. In addition, The Women’s Institute’s work was more advanced than any other organisation unified by ‘identity’ that I could find. When I was looking for a ‘place’ type initiative, there were plenty of examples around, but most projects were in their infancy (as a result of the recent emergence of the Transition Town idea). I chose Bollington (despite its use of Ecoteams) because the group had actually run some projects aiming to have an effect on participant practice. On reflection this did not disadvantage my overall project too much, mainly because Ecoteams seems to have become a standard tool with which these kinds of groups address community sustainability. Both cases chose to use Ecoteams as a tool for change because it had a good reputation, and it was easy to set up and run. As such avoiding studying these cases just because they incorporated the Ecoteams programme would seem rather churlish, given its extensive use by a range of groups for different purposes.

3.3.3.6 Variety between cases

While the cases were chosen to fit categories of motivation for involvement as described above, further variety was noted between cases. This is summarised in Table 3.5.

3.3.3.7 Data sources within cases

Case studies are often associated with qualitative methods, although many authors agree that this is a rather crude characterisation of the approach (Hammersley, 1992; Blaikie, 2000; Yin, 2003). Indeed, what defines a case study is its focus on a particular social phenomena, not the methods it uses (Blaikie, 2000). The starting point here, therefore, was to identify the kind of data that is required to answer the research questions within the framework of a case study.

It is possible to find general recommendations on what kind of data to collect in research case studies. Stake, for instance, advises data collection on the nature of the case, the historical background, physical setting, other contexts, other cases that connect to this one, and informants through which a case can be known (Stake, 2005). Mason advises categorising the source types that exist (people, organisations, texts etc.) and thinking about how they are useful in answering research questions (Mason, 2002). I also take guidance here from the realistic evaluation strategy, which promotes an embedded approach to data collection. As Pawson explains:
Table 3.5 Summary of case studies along different dimensions to draw out the diversity between cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE/DIMENSION</th>
<th>Meanwood School</th>
<th>Holy Trinity Church</th>
<th>Green Gym</th>
<th>Women’s Institute</th>
<th>Bollington Carbon Revolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community brought together by…</td>
<td>Need</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place type</td>
<td>City suburb</td>
<td>Market town</td>
<td>City centre and suburbs</td>
<td>Rural villages</td>
<td>Commuter town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent organisation</td>
<td>Leeds City Council</td>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>British Trust for Conservation Volunteers</td>
<td>National Federation of Women’s Institutes</td>
<td>Bollington Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group type</td>
<td>Local branch of city initiative</td>
<td>Independent group</td>
<td>Local branch of national initiative</td>
<td>Local branch of national initiative</td>
<td>Independent group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>Salaried deputy head and volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Salaried group leader (until self-sufficiency) and volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>Whole school (214 pupils and their parents)</td>
<td>Whole church (200 members) and town residents (16,000)</td>
<td>Gym members (between 5 and 15 per gym)</td>
<td>Ecoteam members (between 5 and 8 per group)</td>
<td>Whole town (7,000 residents) and Ecoteam members (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity length at time of study</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>4-5 months</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity scope</td>
<td>Increase numbers of children walking to school</td>
<td>Increase awareness of environmental and ethical issues</td>
<td>Increase health, environmental awareness and community cohesion</td>
<td>Improve pro-environmental behaviour</td>
<td>Reduce carbon footprint of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sites in this research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People are always knowledgeable about the reasons for their conduct but in a way which can never carry total awareness of the entire set of structural conditions which prompt an action, nor the full set of potential consequences of that action. (Pawson, 1996, p. 302)

For this reason, Pawson’s embedded approach within a case involves collecting data from people involved in different ways with the intervention in question. This is a form of data triangulation by source, to ensure a thorough and broad understanding of the intervention in question. Yin would argue that such source triangulation increases the validity of the research (Yin, 2003).

As well as triangulating the data by source, it is also possible to triangulate using different methods. Indeed, such triangulation is often encouraged in the literature. As Mason comments:

… social experience and lived realities are multi-dimensional and that our understandings are impoverished and may be inadequate if we view these phenomena only along a single dimension (Mason, 2006, p. 10)

Qualitative researchers including Mason, argue that the concept of triangulation does not only mean getting closer to the truth of an object of research, but also adding to the depth and breadth of our understanding of an issue (Mason, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The potential data sources identified in this project were as follows:

- In-depth interviews with (senior) practitioners
- Documentation on the specific cases including secondary data (where available)
- In-depth interviews with participants
- Structured data collection from participants

Table 3.6 shows how each research question is addressed by these different data sources, and which specific data is gleaned from each source.

The design and application of each of these collection procedures is discussed in more detail in the Qualitative approach section (3.3.4). As Table 3.6 shows, each research question is addressed by more than one data source. This amounts to triangulation by either respondent or method, or both. The data sources are also differentiated by type, with a mix of qualitative (interviews with participants and practitioners), quantitative (structured information from participants) and secondary (documentation) data. One method that is not instrumental in answering research questions is the whole-group questionnaire, which is a sampling tool, and discussed in more detail under Methods below (see 3.4).
Table 3.6 Specification of which data sources address which research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data gleaned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the capacity for community-based organisations to influence participants' sustainability practice?</td>
<td>Interviews with (senior) practitioners</td>
<td>Background information on the community-based organisation, the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Background information on the community-based organisation and the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who participates in community-based initiatives on sustainability?</td>
<td>Interviews with (senior) practitioners</td>
<td>Background information on participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured information from participants</td>
<td>Demographic information on participants. Information on community-orientation of participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews with participants</td>
<td>Participant’s history of sustainability practice. Participant’s current involvement in community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What effects do such initiatives have on participants’ sustainability practice?</td>
<td>Interviews with (senior) practitioners</td>
<td>The practitioner’s perception of sustainability practice outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured information from participants</td>
<td>Information on participant’s pro-environmental practices (behaviours and attitudes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews with participants</td>
<td>Participant’s reported change in sustainability practice (including behaviour, attitudes and understanding).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary data on outcomes (where available)</td>
<td>Outcome data from secondary sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other effects do such initiatives have on participants?</td>
<td>Interviews with (senior) practitioners</td>
<td>The practitioner’s perception of community and participant additional outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews with participants</td>
<td>Participant’s reported other outcomes (personal or community).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do such activities stimulate change in a participant’s sustainability practice?</td>
<td>Interviews with (senior) practitioners</td>
<td>The practitioner’s perception of how sustainability practices are stimulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth interviews with participants</td>
<td>Participant’s reports on how they were stimulated to take on sustainability practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3.8 Case timetable

The five cases were run in (overlapping) succession between November 2005 and July 2008. As data collection for each case study finished, analysis and theory building began, and a case report was produced for each case (except the Bollington Carbon Revolution case). This
follows the principles of data collection and analysis in grounded theory, where the two activities should be closely linked and happening simultaneously (Dey, 1999; Charmaz, 2005). It also relates to a technique in qualitative research known as analytic induction (Seale, 1999; Brewer, 2000). Seale describes this technique as made up of five steps: roughly defining the problem, constructing a hypothetical explanation for it, examining a case to see if it supports the hypothesis, if it doesn’t, reformulating the hypothesis or redefining the problem to exclude the negative case, then continuing through several cases until negative instances are no longer found (Seale, 1999). I followed this cycle in the planning and execution of the five case studies. After each round of data collection, the case report included the results and analysis for each case, and some theoretical development, and, as such, represented a gradual refining of my ideas and understanding which typifies the technique of analytic induction. In some cases the report was presented back to the practitioners in full, and then adapted after the practitioner verification meeting. The data collection for different cases took place over the timetable shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Timetable of data collection and report delivery for case studies under this thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of data collection</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Report date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/05 – 03/06</td>
<td>Meanwood School case (pilot)</td>
<td>06/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/06 - 03/07</td>
<td>Holy Trinity case</td>
<td>05/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/06 - 05/08</td>
<td>Green Gyms case</td>
<td>04/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/07 – 05/08</td>
<td>Women’s Institute case</td>
<td>03/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/08 – 07/08</td>
<td>Bollington Carbon Revolution case (verification)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Meanwood school case was a pilot case study, but after the case I decided that the data collection procedures were mostly successful and, as such, results are included in the overall analysis. The Bollington Carbon Revolution case was a verification case which means that it involved a rather brief study. No report was presented to the group, as by this stage write-up of the final thesis was underway.

3.3.4 Qualitative approach

Since qualitative interviewing and analysis form the backbone of the methods of this thesis, a few comments on the literature I am drawing on to justify such an approach are useful. The main points here are that qualitative methods are deemed appropriate for exploratory research, research that describes process, research that places importance on context and research that attempts to uncover the experience of specific actors (Weiss, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Mason, 2002; Williams, 2002). A qualitative approach can also complement the use of an
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

evaluation research strategy and a case study approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Davies, 2000; Yin, 2003).

Since the research questions aim to uncover the processes that participants undergo in their experience of sustainability projects within community-based organisations, a qualitative approach is appropriate. The first research question deals with the community context of these interventions (see 1.3 for research questions). Authors on qualitative methods see them as particularly appropriate for research that places importance on context (Mason, 2002). The second, third and fourth questions deal with the participant’s experience of the project, and, as such, attempts to understand the subject’s view on the world, a common aim of qualitative research (Weiss, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Mason, 2002). These research questions are more successfully answered by qualitative techniques because as Kvale puts it:

The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. (Kvale, 1996, p. 1)

The final research question deals with the process of change for the participant. Weiss see qualitative research as a way of developing detailed description of events, integrating multiple perspectives, and describing process (Weiss, 1994). Robson also argues that qualitative interviews are appropriate: "Where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit … are to be studied prospectively" (Robson, 2002, p.271).

The nature of the kinds of interventions under study, and the existing research base, also have a substantial impact on what data sources are available (Mason, 2002). These projects tend to involve rather small numbers of participants, and are not particularly well networked as a genre of groups. In addition, existing evidence on the workings of such groups is limited, as discussed in the literature review (see 2.4). As such, they are inherently more suited to in-depth approaches which can help to build theory in a new area (Mason, 2002). There is also very little existing data on the impacts of these project, which makes collecting data from secondary research currently rather unrealistic.

A qualitative approach complements both the case study approach and evaluation strategy. In relation to the case study approach, similar issues of generalisation arise, and similar discussions about the form of generalisation that can take place. Williams, for instance, claims that the only means of generalisation in interpretative research is moderatum generalisations: “where aspects of [a situation] can be seen to be instances of a broader recognisable set of features" (Williams, 2002, p. 131). This maps well to the analytical generalisations identified by Yin in writing on case studies (Yin, 2003) (see 3.3.3). In addition, qualitative approaches are accepted by some proponents of evaluation research, especially those concerned with process
evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Davies, 2000). Davies explicitly notes that qualitative research does not conflict with evaluation research, as it is known to be a useful way of creating rich data about the way things work (Davies, 2000).

Note that in this thesis I also make use of some quantitative methods. This does not exactly amount to a mixed-methods approach as the use of quantitative methods is rather minor, and only contributes marginally to the argument of the thesis. Instead I would argue that this represents a qualitative approach, with use of some quantitative data for triangulation (Mason, 2006). Mason argues that this kind of integration can enhance and extend the logic of qualitative explanation (Mason, 2006) and the use of quantitative data in this thesis represents an attempt to do just that.

3.4 Methods

In this section I explain the specific data collection and analysis procedures undertaken within the strategy and approach outlined above (3.3). I begin by detailing the data collection procedure. I then give an account of the evolution of data collection procedures and exceptions made in different cases. I summarise the data analysis procedures undertaken for both qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, I offer a demographic description of the participants that I interviewed for the research, both regarding the sample as a whole, and in relation to the case studies in particular.

For clarity here: the terms ‘participant’ and ‘practitioner’ are used throughout this thesis to define certain groups of interviewees or people involved in some way in a community-based organisation’s activities. I have defined these terms as follows:

- **Participant**: someone involved in or attending group activities
- **Practitioner**: organiser of the group in question (either voluntary or salaried)
- **Senior Practitioner**: organiser of the activity in question at a larger scale (often national)

3.4.1 Data collection procedure

The case studies undertaken involved multiple data collection stages. The process of data collection is summarised in Figure 3.2. Initial interviews with practitioners and senior practitioners, and the collection of associated documents provided background information on the case. Whole-group questionnaires were designed as a sampling tool to select participants for interview. These were followed by interviews with participants to establish how the cases had affected participants’ sustainability practices. These participant interviews had an in-depth and a
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

structured component. Practitioner and senior practitioner interviews took place again after participant interviews and case analysis, to verify the emerging theories. The different methods of data collection are described in detail below. This includes information on who was interviewed or surveyed, how they were selected, why they were appropriate for inclusion, the logistics of the data collection process, questions asked, and any peculiarities of the data collection procedure. Under each section I also provide a log of interviewees with some date and timing details which are of use in judging the validity of the study.

Figure 3.2 Data collection process and function

Before I go on to describe the specifics of data collection, some general comments on qualitative interview style would be useful as this was the main form of data collection. Mason identifies various approaches to qualitative interviewing, but notes that the features that they all have in common are an interactional exchange of dialogue between interviewer and interviewee, an informal style, a thematic approach, and a premise that knowledge is situated and contextual (Mason, 2002). My research is no exception here. The interviews are best described as in-depth, but also ‘semi-structured’ in the sense that interviews include a flexible set of questions which
are usually addressed in a particular order (Weiss, 1994; Mason, 2002; Robson, 2002). Flexibility is important here and advised by Weiss to account for the needs of the interviewee to express themselves comfortably and in a manner that suits them (Weiss, 1994). For both practitioner and participant interviews, questions lists were constructed from the research questions, and each research question has at least one interview question that addresses the issue concerned, with most research questions there is also an interview question for both participants and practitioners. Such a process of linking research questions with interview questions is advised by many textbooks on qualitative interviewing (Weiss, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Mason, 2002). Interviews were digitally recorded and mostly transcribed in full according to best practice (some of the later interviews were partly transcribed in note form).

Ethical issues that arise in qualitative interviews include confidentiality and informed consent (Weiss, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Mason, 2002). These issues are addressed under each data collection method below.

### 3.4.1.1 (Senior) Practitioner Interviews

‘Practitioners’, the organisers of the activity in question, ranged from people employed as community workers or staff of the organisation concerned (Green Gym and Meanwood School cases) to volunteers (Holy Trinity, Women’s Institute and Bollington). Senior practitioners were the people that had responsibility for the project in the parent organisation of each community-based organisation under study. Most of the senior practitioners were employees of national organisations (BTCV Green Gyms, Eco-congregations, National Federation for Women’s Institutes) or local government (Leeds City Council). Bollington Carbon Revolution’s senior practitioners were the leaders of the local Civic Society (volunteers) who had initiated and supported the group. There was no sampling of practitioners as such, as in all cases there were only one or a few people who qualified for interview. As such, interviews often involved more than one practitioner.

Initial practitioner and senior practitioner interviews were a starting point for case study data collection. They sought to gather background data on the context of each project, as well as to elicit comment on possible mechanisms and outcomes affecting participants. Since the practitioners were particularly close to the project and its participants they were uniquely placed to comment on possible regularities in the way that participants react to their work, and the technique of ‘eliciting’ theories from Pawson and Tilley was used here (Pawson, 1996). Senior practitioners had an overview of the scheme in question, and, as such, could judge both how representative a specific group’s activities were, and could begin to comment on the context, mechanisms and outcomes of the projects. (Senior) practitioners were also asked to provide
guidance as to what documentation or previous research is available for further contextual information. A full list of questions asked to practitioners and senior practitioners is included in Appendix 1.

Table 3.8 Data log of practitioner and senior practitioner interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Numbers of people interviewed</th>
<th>Length of interviews (hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>Travel planners, Leeds City Council</td>
<td>11/11/05</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Head teacher, organiser of the walking bus</td>
<td>22/11/05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Eco-congregations head</td>
<td>09/05/06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisers of the Christian Ecology Group (CEG), Rector of Holy Trinity</td>
<td>06/07/06</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>02:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>Organiser of the Wakefield Green Gym; Organiser of Wakefield BTCV</td>
<td>21/08/06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>02:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organiser of National Green Gyms</td>
<td>11/06/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organiser of Reddish Vale Green Gym</td>
<td>15/09/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Organiser of National scheme (90@90)</td>
<td>19/06/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organiser of North Lincolnshire group</td>
<td>28/06/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organiser of Worcestershire groups</td>
<td>15/08/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington Carbon Revolution</td>
<td>Organisers of the group and members of Civic Society</td>
<td>19/05/08</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>02:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14:53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practitioner interviews took place face to face in the person in question’s office or home. The interviewee was briefed in advance as to the questions they would be asked, and given information about the research topic in the form of a leaflet. A log of interviews with practitioners and senior practitioners is shown in Table 3.8. Practitioners have not been named in the thesis but may be identifiable from their description. They were informed of this at interview.

Any documentation recommended by practitioners or senior practitioners, or available publicly, was used for background information. The full list of documentation used is shown in Table 3.9. Where cases are not listed in this table, there was no relevant supplementary documentation available. In general there was not very much documentary evidence available.
Table 3.9 Data log of supplementary documentation used in analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Document types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>(Leeds City Council, 2004; Leeds City Council, 2005; Meanwood School, 2005)</td>
<td>Local council and school travel records and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>(Reynolds, 1999; Reynolds, 2002)</td>
<td>Academic evaluations of Green Gyms (from health perspective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>(National Federation of Women's Institutes, 2008)</td>
<td>National level evaluation document of 90@90 scheme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1.2 Whole-group questionnaire

This questionnaire was intended to provide a sampling tool to determine which of the members of the larger community-based organisations would be interviewed as participants of the sustainability project. The idea was to run a large survey of the community-based organisation or community and to use that survey to choose interviewees across a range of participants (from those that were participating actively, to those that were marginally involved). The survey was tailored to specific cases according to which practice had been targeted, and which activities had been run, and questions were asked about these two elements. The Holy Trinity whole-group questionnaire is shown as an example in Appendix 2. For various reasons (explained below in 3.4.2) this method was only used in two cases, Holy Trinity and Bollington, and details of those two questionnaires are given in Table 3.10.

The Holy Trinity questionnaire took place during a church service, where I made a short announcement about the topic and nature of the survey, and distributed questionnaires and pens at the beginning. About 100 congregation members were present at the service in question. I then stood by the door to collect questionnaires on the way out at the end of the service. This accounts for the rather high number of responses, as it was probably perceived as socially difficult to leave the church without filling in the questionnaire. 54 responded to the whole-group survey at Holy Trinity. From this number 27 volunteered to participate in the interview, and the final 10 interviewees were selected according to their availability on the dates I was able to arrange interviews. For Bollington respondents I provided an internet survey that was distributed to the group’s email mailing list. Unfortunately the response was rather poor (7 responses), and resulted in the data being not particularly helpful for sampling purposes, as I needed to interview all the respondents to the questionnaire apart from practitioners. The limited success of the whole-group questionnaire as a method of sampling is discussed in detail under 3.4.2 below.
Table 3.10 Data log of whole-group questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Numbers of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Congregation of Holy Trinity Church</td>
<td>03/09/06</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington</td>
<td>Members of the BCR mailing list</td>
<td>Internet (from 06/05/08)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1.3 Participant interviews

The research questions aimed to establish whether, how and why each participant changes his or her practice as a result of being involved in a project on sustainability run by a community-based organisation. This was the focus of the participant interview, which was the main form of data collection, and which aimed to answer research questions 2-5. As such, the participant interview also covered the participant’s involvement in community, and additional outcomes for the participant. A full copy of the participant interview protocol is shown in Appendix 3. The interview had two parts: an in-depth series of questions about participant context and experience of the project, and a structured part which asked about the participant’s demographic, community involvement, and sustainability practices.

Interviewees were selected from individuals within the organisation who participated in some way in the activity concerned. In cases where the target population of the group was large, and the level of participation of each individual varied considerably (Holy Trinity and Bollington), sampling of interviewees purposively included respondents from across this range. This represents a technique of theoretical sampling familiar in the grounded theory technique (Locke, 1996): theoretical in the sense that it is trying to expand theory by sampling across the range of participants. This was not possible in the cases where participant numbers were rather low (Meanwood School, Green Gym, Women’s Institute) where sampling was driven by availability of individuals on the day that I visited their activity. In these cases I interviewed all participants present that were willing to be interviewed, and, as such, participants were self-selecting.

A total of 45 interviews took place with participants in the five different case studies. A data log of participant interviews is shown in Table 3.11. In addition, two groups of children at Meanwood School (total 12 children) were also interviewed, although since these interviews met limited success, they are only marginally included in the analysis. Most interviews took place either in the participant’s home, or in a place associated with the community-based organisation (36 respondents). This varied from a greenhouse (Green Gym), the church rectory meeting room (Holy Trinity) to the teacher’s common room (Meanwood School). Such in situ interviewing is
believed to result in more honest responses since people feel more comfortable in their own environment (Weiss, 1994). Some interviews also took place over the telephone when it was more convenient for the respondent (9 respondents). These interviews were generally less successful, given the lack of personal interaction involved in a phone call, and were avoided as far as possible (an issue known in the literature, for instance Weiss, 1994). Most interviews were private conversations between the interviewee and myself, with some exceptions where friends and family members interjected during the interview. As far as possible I attempted to create a private atmosphere.

Before the interview, interviewees were briefed on the nature of the study, and the confidentiality of the information that they were providing (this is common practice, see Kvale, 1996). They were also given some background information on the study in the form of a leaflet which included my contact details. Interviewees were asked to give consent to their interview being recorded and then used later for analysis, an important ethical practice in qualitative research (Weiss, 1994; Kvale, 1996). They were encouraged to contact me with any further comments or questions, but none did. Occasionally personal issues arose in the course of the interview, these were only followed up when I needed to understand these issues in order to understand the intervention, again accepted ethical practice in qualitative research (Mason, 2002). Interviewees are anonymised in the thesis and cannot be identified individually.

In depth qualitative questions for participants were constructed from the research questions. The questions covered the participant’s history of sustainability practice, their involvement in the project and in other community activities, the effect that the project had had on their sustainability practice and more generally on their lives, and their motivations for changing practice if appropriate. The interview was structured to encourage maximum confidence in the interviewee, by starting with a ‘story’ question: ‘Can you tell me more about your involvement with the WI and with the Ecoteam?’ This allows the interviewee to get comfortable talking about something that is relatively easy to engage in (Weiss, 1994). The style of questioning was very direct, and participants were asked explicitly about changes to their practice. Such a direct style was chosen because it seemed the most honest way of dealing with an interviewee, avoiding any tricks or subterfuge (Mason, 2002). Given I was hoping the interviewees would be honest about their own practices, I wanted to avoid duplicity in asking questions myself. To this end the interviewee was also asked a ‘theory’ question at the end of the interview: ‘People think that activities like the Ecoteam within groups like the WI can help to encourage people to take on more environmental behaviours. Do you agree?’ This technique comes from Pawson, who emphasises the importance of openly discussing theory in the interview context and advises taking a direct approach to eliciting theories from interviewees.
(Pawson, 1996). In general the interviews were very positive, with most respondents warming to the theme and appearing to enjoy the interview (an experience that is familiar in qualitative research, see for instance Kvale, 1996).

Table 3.11 Data log of participant interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Numbers of people interviewed</th>
<th>Length of interviews (hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>Participants (adults)</td>
<td>05/12/05 – 11/01/06</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Total: 01:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 00:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants (children)</td>
<td>17/03/06</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Total: 00:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>07/09/06 – 16/09/06</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Total: 07.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 00:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>Participants Wakefield</td>
<td>07/11/06 – 30/11/06</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Total: 03:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants Reddish Vale</td>
<td>15/09/07 – 12/11/07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Total: 02:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 00:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>12/07/07 – 27/05/08</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Total: 07:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 00:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington Carbon Revolution</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>25/05/08 – 06/07/08</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Total: 02:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 00:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45 (excluding children)</td>
<td>27:05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where interviewees reported general change I asked them to give a specific example to draw out the exact nature of what they were reporting (Weiss, 1994; Kvale, 1996). Due to the sequential nature of cases, I was also able to include what Kvale calls ‘interpreting as you go’ questions, especially in the later interviews (Kvale, 1996). This means asking respondents questions like ‘so just to clarify, what you just said is …?’ . I also used a technique of ‘markers’: returning to particular feelings or events that were flagged in one instance to elaborate another (Weiss, 1994).

The structured part of the interview was designed to gather comparable and structured background information on each individual (with the aim of understanding that individual’s context, and allowing for comparison between individuals). All structured questions were taken from a range of existing questionnaires to allow for comparison between my sample, and the general population in data analysis. The design of the structured part is explained in more detail below (3.4.3) and a demographic description of the sample is also given (3.4.4). For the purposes
of data collection the exact questions from several larger surveys were asked of participants to construct comparable data. The structured section took place towards the end of the interview, in order to prevent people thinking in the qualitative part of the interview that I was looking for fixed answers. Indeed, the qualitative part of the interview tended to overlap here, with people questioning and sometimes critiquing quantitative questions.

The substantial differences in interview length shown in Table 3.11, especially for the Green Gym participants, can be explained by the prevalence of participants with learning difficulties in this group. These participants also completed only part of the structured questions. This issue is discussed in detail below (3.4.2). Bollington Carbon Revolution interviews were also rather short. This can probably be explained by the fact that they all took place over the phone, and that by this point in the research I was relatively familiar with the interview process, and accustomed to getting the interviewee to the point.

3.4.1.4 (Senior) Practitioner Verification

Following the data collection steps described above, and initial data analysis, results of the case were presented back to the practitioner for discussion and verification. This served the dual function of beginning to disseminate findings, and identifying any surprising or unusual results that have emerged, based on the (senior) practitioner’s experience in running the group. This method of returning to interviewees to validate data is a well known technique in qualitative research, known as ‘member validation’ or ‘verification’ (Kvale, 1996; Seale, 1999; Huberman and Miles, 2002). The idea to verify the data with a practitioner came up after the Meanwood School case and, as such, only cases after this one included practitioner verification. The Bollington Carbon Revolution case was a verification case study and, as such, practitioner verification did not seem necessary. A full log of practitioner verification interviews is included in Table 3.12.

Note that interviewees in the verification process were some of the same interviewees that had taken part in the initial practitioner interviews. In certain cases only one verification interview took place, when several initial interviews had taken place (Green Gym, Women’s Institute). Here, selection of the interviewee depended on availability, someone having something to say (for instance the National Women’s Institute representative had no comments on my report), and in the Green Gym case an issue that arose in connection to the respondents in Wakefield having learning difficulties which necessitated contact with the National Green Gym representative.
Table 3.12 Data log of practitioner and senior practitioner verification interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Numbers of people interviewed</th>
<th>Length of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Holy Trinity Practitioners</td>
<td>10/03/07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>Organiser of National Green Gyms</td>
<td>15/05/08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Organiser of North Lincolnshire group</td>
<td>26/11/07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington Carbon Revolution</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3:19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the verification interview the practitioners in question were given a summary of the main findings, or sometimes an initial report on findings. They were then asked to comment on what they thought. This meant that the interview was structured by the order of the findings as I had presented them in turn.

3.4.2 Evolution and exceptions in data collection methods

Since analysis and theory building took place from the beginning of the data collection period, the data collection methods evolved as the study progressed. The main point at which data collection methods were adapted was after the pilot case study with Meanwood School, lessons from which are summarised below. In addition, some further changes were made in response to the individual cases, these are explained under Green Gym in Wakefield and Whole-group questionnaire headings below.

3.4.2.1 Pilot case study changes

The following problems with data collection methods were identified during the pilot case study:

1. Contextual information on each participant was collected in too unstructured a fashion, meaning that completeness of data depended on the character of the interviewee.

To overcome this problem a more structured series of questions were added to the interview to explore the context of each participant (with details on employment, household composition, any voluntary activities, relations within the community and environmental values, see Appendix 3, 11.3). This allowed the activity itself to be discussed in more detail during the
semi-structured part of the interview. Contextual questions were made identical from case to case allowing for comparison across the whole data set at the end of the research.

2. At Meanwood School only those heavily involved in the project were interviewed, and interviewees were selected by the practitioner potentially leading to bias in interviewee selection.

At this point the whole-group questionnaire was added to the data collection procedures to provide a sampling tool for the selection of individuals to interview, preventing any bias in interviewee selection which may have occurred in the Meanwood School case. As it turned out this was not a wholly successful change in methods, as discussed in more detail below.

3. At Meanwood School there was no verification interview with the practitioner. This was deemed to be useful strategy after the Meanwood School case to improve validity.

Some minor changes to the participant interview protocol were also implemented to ensure that the dynamic of the interview was conducive to open conversation. Some of the topics covered during the pilot did not bring open responses due to where they were positioned in the overall protocol.

3.4.2.2 Green Gym in Wakefield

Many of the interviewed Green Gym members in Wakefield had learning difficulties. It was very difficult for me to communicate with some members (note this was undoubtedly partly due to my inexperience with interviewing people with learning difficulties), whereas with others a relatively easy conversation took place. As a result some of the interviews were not successful at the Green Gym. I define lack of success as interviews in which I was not convinced that genuine communication between the interviewee and myself had taken place. Various problems arose in data collection and analysis as a result of this issue. It became clear to me early on that open-ended questions and questions that make oblique reference to issues were less successful with people with learning difficulties, and that direct questions were more likely to gain understanding and thus answers. This is supported by the literature (Booth and Booth, 1996). This means of asking questions placed considerable emphasis on my skills as an interviewer, requiring quick thinking in order to construct simple questions that were not leading.

Some participants did not understand the general concepts of sustainable consumption or environmental behaviour in a way that interviewees without learning difficulties do. This relates to a known feature of people with learning difficulties: the difficulty of thinking in abstract terms (Booth and Booth, 1996). However, the term learning difficulties covers a wide range of abilities (Nadarajah et al., 1995), and some of the participants here were clearly able to make the
connection between what is going on in the Green Gym and sustainability practice more generally. People with learning difficulties are known to have difficulties with dates and time, and a tendency to have a ‘strong present orientation’ (Booth and Booth, 1996, p. 57). As such, establishing the change that occurred following involvement with the Green Gym was sometimes difficult. Each time someone reported a change they were asked if that had occurred since involvement in the Green Gym, but they weren’t always able to answer such questions.

Many of the participants attending the Wakefield site were unable to read and write, and, as such, the second structured part of the interview was rather more difficult than in other cases. It required me to read through questions and answers in turn in order to complete the task. As much data as possible was gathered here, although due to the rather onerous nature of reading through the questions, and the confusion that can arise from this, many interviewees lost patience before the end of the process and gave up. There were also some problems in reporting dates and numbers here. For most interviewees only half of the survey was completed.

Note that while this data has its limitations, I think it is important to use material that draws on the experiences of people with learning difficulties. The presence of people with learning difficulties is not unusual in BTCV projects, with about a quarter of the Green Gym projects having 50% or more members with learning difficulties (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007). People with disabilities are known to be less active as volunteers, and the government has attempted to encourage more participation from this group (Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007).

### 3.4.2.3 Whole-group questionnaire

I had initially planned to conduct a brief questionnaire with all members of each case study organisation to establish the outcomes of the activity in question, and their level of participation in it. As it turned out, this method was only successfully used for the Holy Trinity group. The idea of using a questionnaire first emerged as a result of the pilot case study (Meanwood School), where I deemed sampling dependent on practitioner recommendation rather unsatisfactory, due to potential practitioner bias. For the Holy Trinity case study (where the congregation numbered over 100) the community-based organisation was rather large and this method resulted in a sampling strategy that allowed me to select participants according to their involvement and the changes in practices that took place. In the Green Gym cases, the groups were very small, and I interviewed all the members that attended (with the exception of a few that declined) on the days that I was able to visit the groups making the whole-group questionnaire rather redundant. In addition, some members were unable to read and write which resulted in the whole-group questionnaires being potentially undermining of relations with
participants. Women’s Institute groups were similarly small, and were dependent on members being willing to talk and available on a day that I could visit. I attempted a whole-group questionnaire with Bollington Carbon Revolution, which was an internet questionnaire sent round to their members. This met with very little success (7 responses).

3.4.3 Data analysis procedures

Qualitative data analysis took place iteratively throughout the project as each case came to an end, and in order to present findings back to practitioners for verification. Quantitative data was analysed at the end of the project when the results from all cases were available. These two different methods are discussed in detail below, after an initial comment on my overall approach to data analysis which details the grounded theory approach in use.

3.4.3.1 Overall approach

The research takes an inductive approach to theory building, and I use a grounded theory approach in analysing my data. There are several interpretations of the term grounded theory and my exact position needs specifying here. Locke distinguishes two main schools which emerged in the early 1990s as a result of new contributions by Strauss and Corbin, and the reaction to this by Glaser (Locke, 1996). The main differences between these two are in their view of the researcher, and related view on where the data emerges from and what is legitimate in terms of the use of existing theory and concepts. According to Locke, in Strauss and Corbin’s approach: “researchers essentially interrogate the data they gather to arrive at conceptual categories”; whereas in Glaser’s approach “researchers maintain distance and independence from the phenomena they study” (Locke, 1996, p. 241). One of the most important distinctions here is that Strauss and Corbin use existing literature and theory from the outset, while being open minded in data analysis to new concepts emerging. In contrast Glaser ‘avoids preconceptions’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Glaser’s approach has attracted critique because it assumes that the scientist is neutral and can detach themselves from their intellectual heritage when interviewing and analysing, a point of view which does not sit comfortably with post-positivist perspectives (Charmaz, 2005). This results in a rather laboured approach to research in which “theory-building research is begun as close as possible to the ideal of no theory under consideration and no hypothesis to test” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 302) and where researchers “should avoid thinking about specific relationships between variables and theories as much as possible, especially at the outset of the process” (ibid. p. 302). In practice, critics have argued that researchers bring theory and understanding to a topic as a matter of course, in particular because we set research questions
and our interest shapes the topic and the data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2005). It can also be argued that bringing previous theory and insights into inductive research is positive, as we incorporate other people’s capacity for insights, rather than relying on our own.

As such, the Strauss and Corbin school of grounded theory will be used here. Beyond these guiding philosophical issues, indeed, the two schools take very similar approaches to data analysis. In the following section I discuss the methods of qualitative analysis used in this research in detail.

3.4.3.2 Qualitative analysis

After transcription of the interviews from recordings, qualitative analysis of the interviews that took place involved the following stages:

1. Coding of data
2. Categorising of codes and identification of accounts
3. Theory and story building

This process mirrors the core activities recognised to take place during qualitative analysis which tends to be presented in three parts. Various authors have given different labels to these activities which point to a similar root: description, conceptual ordering and theorising (Strauss and Corbin, 1998); data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994); describing, classifying, connecting (Dey, 1993). Each of these processes will be described in turn below.

In addition to this understanding of a process in qualitative research, Tesch also offers a typology of approaches to qualitative analysis: - 'language-oriented' - 'descriptive/interpretive' (explaining meaning of phenomena to those who interpret it) - 'theory building' (identifying connections between social phenomena) (Tesch, 1990). Elements of all three of these approaches are incorporated in my analysis, these will be discussed under the different process headings below.

Coding

The coding stage of qualitative analysis is a means of indexing a large amount of text so that it can be retrieved in different ways (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The idea behind this is for the researcher to become more familiar with the data, to make the data more accessible for the next stage of data analysis, and to start to find patterns, and structures within the data (ibid.). In this research I have used several techniques recommended in the literature to aid with this stage of the analysis which I will outline in turn. At this stage of the analysis I used the computer program Nvivo to enable easy indexing and retrieval of my interviews.
Various authors recommend multiple readings of the data with an emphasis on different types of code (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Mason, 2002; Richards, 2005). This includes coding for the content of the interview (what sorts of things are people talking about?), more analytical coding for interpretation of interviewee perspectives (what is the significance of what people are talking about?) and coding for the language used by interviewees (how do people talk?). In this thesis the main focus was on content and analytical coding. Each interview was coded at least twice, each time with consideration of both content and analysis. Given the nature of the task, the first reading tended to place more emphasis on the content of the interview. As the material became more familiar the second reading focused on analytical coding. The second reading also had the function of checking for codes missed the first time round.

As a guide in this first stage of the analysis I used three sensitizing concepts from Pawson and Tilley’s realistic evaluation strategy (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The idea of sensitizing concepts comes originally from Blumer, and is summarised by Blaikie as a set of concepts which offer a means of orientation in executing research (Blaikie, 2000). In the initial stages of analysis this is particularly useful as the concepts provide clues and suggestions about what to look out for (ibid.). In practice the sensitizing concepts were the ideas of ‘context’, ‘mechanism’ and ‘outcome’ defined in 3.3.2. Using these sensitizing concepts in analysis ensured that coding focused on answering the research questions that also revolve around these three concepts. While using such a structure from the beginning is to some extent restrictive, and does not represent an entirely open approach to the data, it does ensure that a constant focus on the research questions is maintained. The key concepts are taken from Pawson and Tilley but strong parallels exist in an example scheme given by Strauss and Corbin – ‘conditions’, ‘actions/interactions’ and ‘consequences’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This kind of coding is also known as axial coding (ibid.).

**Categorising and Accounts**

This stage of qualitative analysis involves working out how codes can be categorised and how categories, or concepts relate to each other. Qualitative data often consists of complex and abundant material, and categorisation allows simplification in order to begin to theorise about the data (Weiss, 1994; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Coffey and Atkinson posit three levels of categorisation here: retrieving coded data; playing with and exploring these codes; and transforming data into meaningful material (patterns, irregularities, relationships etc.) (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Alongside these stages in the process Weiss divides analysis into ‘issue-focused’ and ‘case-focused’ work (Weiss, 1994). Issue-focused analysis takes generic issues
related to the research questions across several cases or individuals and attempts to build theory from them. Case-focused analysis looks at specific cases (at multiple possible levels of analysis), often wishing to tell the story of a case. Both of these types of analysis are in use here as I take note of what happens to the collective set of interviewees, as well as what happens to individual interviewees.

Issue-focused categorisation, as Weiss defines it, involved the further organisation of codes under the three sensitizing concepts (Weiss, 1994). In practice I evolved category structures around the three sensitizing concepts which were slightly different for each case study. The example in Figure 3.3, shows the category structure for the Women’s Institute case, as displayed in Nvivo. Note that many of these key concepts were used across cases (for instance environmental attitudes, behaviour and awareness, under the ‘outcomes’ category). Others were not, for instance, here one of the individual contexts is labelled ‘Ethos’ which was a context specific to the Women’s Institute. This is symptomatic of qualitative work: categorisations which have relevance to all cases provide the ability to generalise, while categorisations for individual cases bring out the richness and variety of the data and by extension the real world (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). By this stage in the analysis I had also divided the ‘context’ category into individual and case context, which made a useful distinction between different data. In building this categorisation structure, I also used other qualitative research tools including, for instance, Strauss and Corbin’s idea of ‘theoretical comparison’. Here, I had a category for political outcomes which existed mainly because the literature suggested that these might be present (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In fact very few items were ever listed under this category, and most were negative instances.

‘Case-focused’ or ‘narrative’ analysis also had a role here. In particular, I used the concept of ‘accounts’ to interpret the way that respondents talk about their practice (Lyman and Scott, 1970; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Orbuch, 1997). The concept is historically defined as “a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour” (Lyman and Scott, 1970, p.112). Later work by Orbuch moves away from the idea of an account as an excuse or justification, and towards a broader definition: “account-as-stories to encompass both private and public explanations for a wider array of social actions” (Orbuch, 1997, p. 474). In practice, this concept was used to track the story of the participant through the three different stages (context, mechanisms and outcomes) and later evolved into a theory. This meant that participants’ stories about how and why their practices evolved were analysed alongside the more fragmented categorisation process.
The fundamental process behind the theory building part of my data analysis is known as ‘abductive reasoning’ (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Blaikie, 2000). Coffey and Atkinson describe this process as starting from the particular, identifying a phenomenon and then accounting for that phenomenon by relating it to broader concepts (inspecting our own experience, using theories and ideas, looking at other cases etc.) (ibid.). In this sense abduction seeks to go beyond the data and locate it in explanatory or interpretative frameworks. The frameworks I used to assist this process are the realistic evaluation method (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), the subject-specific theories that inform my work (e.g. practice theory, theories of place) and, at a deeper level, the critical realist approach which implies certain ontological and epistemological standpoints.
In the context of these frameworks I used a series of tools and techniques to aid the construction of theory. At a basic level this included using diagrams and tables to represent categories in relation to each other or to explore the categories in more detail. This kind of work is recommended by various authors on qualitative analysis (Huberman and Miles, 2002; Richards, 2005). Diagrams and tables sometimes took the form of pathways for specific participants and participant types – looking at how a participant enters, is affected by, and finishes a project. This idea comes from the realistic evaluation strategy which calls such pathways ‘context-mechanism-outcome configurations’ (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Another tool I used extensively here is the creation of ‘ideal types’. The term ‘ideal type’ was coined by Max Weber, and means at its simplest one of a class of objects (a ‘type’) which are products of the mind (‘ideal’) (Albrow, 1990). Ideal types set out to ‘analytically accentuate’ the essential traits or characteristics of a social phenomenon in order to better understand them (Morrison, 2006). In practice this means that a set of ideal types are a representation of the empirical situation that they refer to, which emphasises certain differences for theoretical reasons. I used ideal types for various different categorisations here, including categorisations of participants practice history, their practice outcomes, and their level of involvement in the community-based organisation. This is a similar technique to that proposed by Strauss and Corbin in developing categories in terms of their dimensions and properties (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These ideal types eventually evolved into a theory in combination with Pawson and Tilley’s idea of pathways (see 8.2).

Another tool used in theory building, particularly in the chapter which reports the community context for practice change (Chapter 4), was narrative structuring. This refers to the process of turning the stories of practitioners and participants into a story that is useful in the context of my research questions (Kvale, 1996). An explanation of how this was done in the context of chapter descriptions is included in the introduction to Chapter 4 (4.1). This draws on guidelines from Coffey and Atkinson who suggest identifying key events, looking for signposts given by the respondents, and thinking about how the story is told by participants and practitioners.

3.4.3.3 Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data was collected in the participant interviews, where a structured questionnaire was given to participants at the end of their in-depth interview. In quantitative data terms, the sample is of a rather small size (45 respondents, not all of whom completed surveys) and purposively collected (45 respondents were purposively chosen from 5 cases which in themselves were sampled for diversity). These surveys used questions from existing national
surveys to allow for comparisons between the participants in this study, and both the general and volunteering populations. Note that the demographic data gathered in this way is presented in part 3.4.4 below where I describe my sample. All of these secondary data sources have substantially greater numbers of respondents than this survey, ranging up to 60,000 households (Office for National Statistics, 2008a). As a result the most appropriate means of statistical analysis and comparison for this quantitative material is descriptive. This means that percentage comparisons are made between my own sample and the general or volunteering populations. More formal statistical analysis of the data (for instance Chi squared test) was not appropriate given the relative sizes of the sample, and the purposive nature of participant and case selection.

The secondary data used here is taken from substantial national surveys. This includes surveys explicitly focused on volunteering, those dealing with more general demographic data and data collected by Defra on pro-environmental values and behaviour. The main sources used are presented in Table 3.13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Section</th>
<th>Sources of data for comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Citizenship Survey (Kitchen <em>et al.</em>, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Trends 38 (Office for National Statistics, 2008c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis of National Survey of Volunteering (Cabinet Office, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour Force Survey (Office for National Statistics, 2008a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Trends (Office for National Statistics, 2008b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Trends (Office for National Statistics, 2008b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis of UK 2000 Time Use Survey (Ruston, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>General Household Survey (Office for National Statistics, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizenship Survey (Kitchen <em>et al.</em>, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Defra Public Attitudes to Environment (Defra, 2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.4 Sample description

Here I describe my sample in terms of the demographics of the participants that I interviewed. As explained above, in participant interviews a certain amount of structured demographic information was collected in order to gain an impression of the sample, and to allow for comparison with more general data on volunteers. In general, the sample is fairly representative of the volunteering population, in age, gender, education, income and employment. There are, however, some exceptions in the sample, as a result of the specific
nature of the cases under study. The demographic nature of each case is therefore discussed below.

### 3.4.4.1 Demographic of participants: whole sample

Here I discuss age, gender, education, household income and employment status of the participants in my sample, comparing this data to national data, and to the volunteering population.

The age range of participants in this research is shown in Figure 3.4, along with comparative national statistics. Here, there were very few participants aged below 29 (n=5/45) and most are over 40 (n=31/45). In the UK in 2001 the population was relatively evenly distributed, although there were slightly more 30-39 year olds and a gradual drop off after 59 (Office for National Statistics, 2001). Participants in my sample were therefore rather old in comparison to the general population of the UK. While there are some contradictions in the literature in this area (discussed in more detail in 2.3.3), survey data suggests rather low participation in volunteering in the 20s and 30s age group, and high participation among the very young, and those over about 45 (Ruston, 2000; Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007). As such, my sample here was fairly representative of the volunteering population, as it is skewed towards people over 40, although there are relatively few young people in my sample.

With relation to gender: my sample included 16 men and 29 women (36% and 64% respectively). Evidently the Women’s Institute case distorts the figures here somewhat, and if they are removed the proportions are less substantially different: 16 men (43%) and 21 women (57%). The literature suggests that women are slightly more likely to volunteer than men, although this difference is rather marginal in formal volunteering (Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007).

Percentages of participants holding the different educational qualifications are presented in Figure 3.5. The data here shows two distinct peaks: with a large proportion of participants with degree-level education (n=16/45: 36%), and a large proportion with other or no qualifications (n=17/45: 39%). This compares to 23% at degree-level and 20% with other or no qualifications in the general population in 2008 (Office for National Statistics, 2008c). Typically studies on volunteers have found that those holding degree-level or higher education are substantially more likely to volunteer than those with no qualifications (Kitchen et al., 2006). The disparity between data in my research and the national volunteering picture is a result of the educational profile of the members of the Green Gym case (discussed under case demographics below).
Figure 3.4 Distribution of participants in my sample compared to distribution of UK population by age range

Figure 3.5 Distribution of participants in my sample compared to distribution of UK population by highest qualification attained

A comparison of household income ranges in my participants and in the general UK population is presented in Figure 3.6. Note that data on UK household incomes here is taken from the British Household Panel Survey of 2009 (British Household Panel Survey, 2009). Overall, it seems that my participants are considerably wealthier than the general population, with more high earners and less low earners. Note however that my household income data is
incomplete, as only 31 out of 45 participants declared their incomes. The missing data on incomes was mainly from the Green Gym case (n=12/14), as participants did not know their household income. Given the deprived nature of the areas in which the Wakefield Green Gyms are based, the data is probably distorted in favour of wealthier participants, as none of the participants that failed to answer this question was in employment. In addition, given the high level of participants with a degree in the sample, the large number of high household incomes (11 over £45,000) is less surprising. Note also that this data is based on the response to the question ‘what is your household income’ and, as such, may have been answered differently by different people (including or excluding tax).

Figure 3.6 Distribution of participants in my sample compared to distribution of UK population by household income range

The working situation of participants, in comparison to the national averages where possible, is shown in Figure 3.7. Note that many of the respondents made more than one entry in this section, especially those that chose ‘voluntary worker’ where 16 of 23 have at least one other entry. The high number of voluntary workers is due to the context in which people were interviewed being voluntary work (people in fulltime employment have less time for volunteering). What is immediately apparent from the figure is that very few respondents are in full time employment (n=7/45), and only 18 of 45 are in employment at all (40%). In contrast, in 2006 47% of the population were in employment (derived from Office for National Statistics, 2006 from which I calculated the rate of employment in relation to the whole population of the
UK). There are also lots of retired respondents, as can be expected given the age range of participants discussed above.

![Distribution of Participants in Sample Compared to Distribution of UK Population by Working Situation](image)

**Figure 3.7** Distribution of participants in my sample compared to distribution of UK population by working situation (note that UK data is provided where available)

### 3.4.4.2 Demographics of participants by case

Here I will give a demographic description of the participants in each case in turn. There were considerable differences between cases, by virtue of the case selection process which aimed for a diverse range of cases. The demographics of each case are also summarised in Table 3.14. The data used to describe the cases is taken from the structured part of the participant interviews (see 3.4.1.3 above), and I also draw on secondary data from the geodemographic tool ACORN to enhance the description (CACI, 2008).

At Meanwood School the participants were the parents of children at the school who were helping out on the walking bus. The school is in the Meanwood area of Leeds, a suburb about 3 miles from the city centre. The geodemographic tool ACORN categorises residents of Meanwood as having medium family income, and medium home ownership, with relatively few residents educated to degree level (CACI, 2008). The school is situated near to a large estate where most homes are well maintained and semi-detached, and where many of the school children live. My participants’ at Meanwood School were aged 30-49, typical of people who have primary school age children. All four were in work, although the three women involved in
the bus worked part time. As a result they had rather large household incomes with three of the four in the £35-45,000 bracket. Three of the four participants had a degree or higher education qualification, which makes them unusual in Meanwood as a whole.

Table 3.14 Summary of demographic information on participants by case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meanwood</th>
<th>Holy Trinity</th>
<th>Green Gym</th>
<th>Women’s Institute</th>
<th>Bollington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>All between 30 and 49</td>
<td>Vary from 40 to 70+; median age range 60-69</td>
<td>Vary from less than 20 to 70+; median age range 40-49</td>
<td>Median age 60-69; all but two respondents in this range</td>
<td>Most participants 30-39, one in 70+ range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender (ratio female : male)</strong></td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>All female</td>
<td>3:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td>3 have degree or higher education qualification; 1 has other qualification.</td>
<td>8 have degree or higher education qualification; 2 have GCE or other.</td>
<td>2 have degree or higher education; 8 have GCE or other; 7 have no qualifications.</td>
<td>4 have degrees; 4 have GCE or other qualification.</td>
<td>All have degrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Income (in thousands)</strong></td>
<td>All earn between 25 and 45, 3 in 35-45 bracket.</td>
<td>6 earn below 25; 2 earn 25-35; 2 earn over 55.</td>
<td>Mostly undeclared, 4 earn below 25; one in 45-55 bracket.</td>
<td>3 earn below 25; 3 earn from 25-45; one earns over 55</td>
<td>3 earn over 55; two earn between 25 and 45.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working Situation</strong></td>
<td>All working, 3/4 work part time.</td>
<td>None work full time, 4 work part time, 5 retired, one unpaid family worker.</td>
<td>2 work full time, none work part time, 1 retired, 1 student, the rest are unemployed or voluntary workers</td>
<td>1 works full time, 2 work part time, the rest are retired.</td>
<td>2 work part time, 3 work full time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Holy Trinity participants were congregation members that attended the events and activities that the Christian Ecology Group organised in the church. The church is situated in a rural market town in the north of England, located near the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The church is in the centre of town, at the top of the high street and as a result it is one of the focal points of the community. The congregation comes from all over the town and from surrounding villages. The ACORN description of the town shows residents to have medium income, low home ownership, and medium education to degree level (CACI, 2008). When I attended a
service at the church, congregation members were on average rather old (60+) and this profile was reflected in my interviewees all of whom were over 40, with a median age range of 60-69. Most of the participants I talked to were women, and most were very well educated, with 8/10 holding either a degree or higher education qualification. With most of the participants at Holy Trinity in retirement or in part time work, the household income levels are not particularly high, with most participants (6/10) reporting incomes of under £25,000. The range of salaries was rather broad however with two of the younger participants in the high earning £55,000+ bracket.

Green Gym participants were people who volunteered to be involved in community gardening or conservation projects in deprived neighbourhoods in the north of England. I studied Green Gym projects in two locations: Wakefield and Reddish Vale. The neighbourhoods in Wakefield were visibly deprived, with run-down housing, boarded up houses, and young people hanging around on street corners. Reddish Vale was less visibly deprived, although there is a large council estate near the case study site. Wakefield residents are characterised by low income, low education and medium home ownership; Reddish Vale by medium income, low education and high home ownership (CACI, 2008). Members of both gyms ranged in age from less than 20 to over 70, with most ages in between represented, and the median age being 40-49. Only two of the members had a degree or higher educational qualification (one at each location), and 12/15 of the Wakefield members had no qualifications or other qualifications. Many of the Green Gym participants in Wakefield had learning difficulties or mental health problems, and as a result none were in employment (one was retired, one was a student and the rest were unemployed). Note that people with disabilities are much less likely to volunteer than those without, so the Wakefield group is rather unusual in the country as a whole (Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007). At Reddish Vale, two of the Green Gym participants work full time. Because of the high numbers of participants with learning difficulties, most of the Wakefield participants could not tell me their household income. The one high income participant was a member of the Reddish Vale group (in the £45-55,000 category).

Women’s Institute participants were members of three different institutes based in North Lincolnshire and Worcestershire. The locations of these institutes were either extremely rural (North Lincs) or rural but adjacent to a city (Worcs). All three groups were in villages with relatively few amenities, and surrounded by farmland. Participants lived in well-kept houses which ranged from modest semi-detached, to large, detached residences. According to ACORN, the residents of this kind of neighbourhood are characterised by very high average income, medium home ownership and high educational levels (CACI, 2008). Residents tend to be older (aged over 45) (ibid.). My respondents were indeed rather old, with all but two respondents aged 60-69. They were also well educated, with 4/8 having degrees. Most of the respondents were
retired (5/8) and as such their income levels were not extremely high: indeed incomes were rather varied with most categories (from under £15,000 to over £55,000) represented in the eight respondents. Three respondents were in work (two part time, one full time).

Bollington Carbon revolution participants were based in Bollington in Cheshire, a small commuter town just outside Macclesfield. This is a rather wealthy town, with a variety of amenities, although there are some poorer areas the overall impression is of a wealthy suburb. Houses range from terraced cottages, to large detached homes. The ACORN description categorises Bollington as a place where wealthy working families with mortgages live, and notes that incomes, home ownership and education in Bollington are all very high compared to the national average (CACI, 2008). These features are fairly characteristic of my sample, all of whom have degrees, and most of whom have high incomes (3/5 earn over £55,000). All are in work, with 2/5 in full time jobs. The age range of participants is interesting, since most are aged 30-39 (4/5). This is not a typical age to be volunteering, as explained in the general demographics above.

In general then, there is considerable variety between cases in terms of the demographics of the participants that they attract. To summarise each case in turn: Meanwood School participants are high income, well-educated parents; Holy Trinity are well educated, elderly churchgoers with a range of incomes, the Green Gym members are less educated, mostly unemployed and likely to have low incomes given their neighbourhood, the Women’s Institute is made up of retired women with varied wealth, and Bollington members are wealthy young professionals.

3.5 Generalisability and validity of results

The issue of generalisability was discussed in relation to both case study and qualitative approaches above (3.3.3 and 3.3.4). For clarity here, it helps to express the extent that this thesis can allow generalisation about the role of community-based organisations in influencing participants’ sustainability practices. The principle kind of generalisations to be made here are ‘analytical’ generalisations (Yin, 2003). Such generalisations make a contribution to understandings of process and the relationships between concepts emerging from the data. They are particularly appropriate for this study because the research questions refer to the process instigated by community-based organisations which has an impact on participant sustainability practices. In this thesis I also try to link a group of concepts associated with community and another group associated with practice in building theory. The links I am making here are not statistical, but analytical: generalising about how change in practice happens in communities, rather than what exact measure of change in practice can be attributed to communities. To be a
little more precise, such analytical generalisations emerge from the tools used in qualitative analysis – such as ‘ideal types’ and ‘accounts’ as described above. In my work they also involve using explanatory theories from the literature to explain regularities in the data.

The use of multiple case studies and sampling for diversity was intended to allow for greater generalisation about the role of community-based organisations in motivating participants to take on sustainability practices. Because I have used a wide variety of cases, analytical generalisations that I have made about the topic of the thesis are more likely to be transferable to other cases that were not represented in my study. Where possible I also sampled for diversity among participants in the cases (those that had and had not changed their practices) and, as such, widened the understanding of the relationship between involvement and change. In addition, there is scope for understanding the representativeness of the sample of participants in this study. This is possible because quantitative questions to participants allow for comparison with various other populations (3.4.3). This includes the general population in relation to sustainability attitudes and behaviour, and the volunteering population in relation to demographic characteristics. In addition, some of the cases I researched represent local instances of a programme implemented in multiple context (Meanwood School, Green Gym, Women’s Institute) making the geographical location of projects in the North of England less of an issue.

The sorts of issues that threaten validity in both qualitative and case study research include reactivity (results being affected by the presence of a researcher) respondent bias (respondents answering as they think the researcher wants them to answer) and researcher bias (Robson, 2002). In addition, when programme theory is the basic aim of research, people tend to express doubt over the respondents’ abilities to identify causal mechanisms and doubts over abilities of practitioners’ to have insights (Weiss, 1998).

There are various tools to increase validity in qualitative research, and these have been built into the research process for this thesis as far as possible (as Kvale, 1996 advises). First, practitioners were asked to verify results once initial analysis had taken place (see 3.4.1). Second, there was considerable triangulation of both sources and methods (see 3.3.3). Third, I used analytic induction techniques by running cases in succession, and building on data collection and analysis iteratively throughout the process (see 3.3.3). Note that these three techniques (member validation, triangulation and analytic induction) are identified by Seale in his book on the quality of qualitative research, alongside another technique: looking for negative instances. This involves a research showing: "willingness to seek out disconfirming evidence, and to allow this to modify general ideas" (Seale, 1999, p. 74). This technique was also evident in my research strategy, in the sense that the idea of sampling for diversity was to find cases that differ from the literature.
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the methodology, research approach and methods used in exploring the research questions for this thesis. The thesis was guided by a critical realist methodology which I argued was an appropriate methodological perspective for a study concerned with environmental and ethical issues, given its realist ontology and relativist epistemology. Four parts of the methods literature were drawn on to set the research strategy and approach. These include induction, evaluation research strategy, case study and qualitative approaches. The realistic evaluation research strategy was perhaps the strongest structural thread passing through my research, as it provides a sensitizing framework which affects research questions, data collection, and data analysis. In this chapter I gave a detailed summary of the methods used to collect and analyse the data in question, where I mainly used qualitative collection techniques, and a grounded theory analysis approach. I also commented on the participants that I interviewed using demographic data. Finally, I commented on generalisability and validity of the results in connection with the methods used. In the following chapter I begin to report on and analyse the results of the thesis, taking each research question in turn.
4 Community Context

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I begin by describing the five case studies undertaken as part of this research. This is intended to give the reader an impression of the five substantially different projects on community-based sustainability that make up the empirical focus of this thesis. I then analyse the significance of various features of these cases in providing capacity for participants to change their sustainability practices. In doing so I provide results and analysis to answer the first research question which reads ‘What is the capacity for community-based organisations to influence participants’ sustainability practice?’.

This chapter begins with a descriptive outline of each case study. For each case the following details are given: background information on the group, the parent organisation and other connected activities, an explanation of the sustainability practice problem as perceived by the group and the activities it organised to address that problem, and a summary of other notable features arising from the case. The latter are generally issues that are emphasised strongly by practitioners or participants at interview. The main data sources for the descriptions below are: senior practitioner interviews, practitioner interviews, and documentation provided by the organisations under study. I also draw on participant interviews here. These sources are referenced throughout the chapter as appropriate.

I then proceed with an analysis of the significant contextual features of the five cases which are seen to affect the community-based organisation’s capacity to influence participants’ sustainability practice. In essence, the answer to the research question which this chapter addresses is that community-based organisations’ capacity for changing their participants’ sustainability practices is bounded by social context. The elements of social context that bound the organisations’ capacity to act are identified here. Using practice theory as a starting point (see 2.2.2), I categorise elements of social context that bound activities into cultural rules, and organisational, infrastructural and participant resources (see 4.7). I then explain how each of these elements affects the community-based organisations capacity to enable change. The analytical part of this chapter therefore marks the beginning of the theoretical contribution of my thesis.

Two terms need further clarification here. During the course of the study it became clear that these organisations tend to exist within a complex of relationships with other organisations. I have categorised these other organisations into two types: parent and connected organisations. Both terms appear regularly in this chapter, and as such I define these two types as follows:
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

4.2 Meanwood C of E School

This case study focused on the walking bus project set up by Meanwood Church of England Primary School in Leeds. This project was stimulated by a school travel planning process that was completed in March of 2005, which in turn was motivated by a concern for children’s safety on the road as they arrived at school (Meanwood School, 2005; Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). At the time that I began the case study, the walking bus had been active for just over six months. This case was intended as a pilot case study, but still resulted in substantial findings and results are included in the analysis for that reason. Data collection for the case was conducted between November 2005 and March 2006. The coordinator of both the travel plan and the walking bus at Meanwood School was the deputy head teacher of the school, and is referred to as the ‘practitioner’ here.

The school travel plan was supported by Leeds City Council, the parent organisation in this case, whose school travel advisors facilitate travel planning for primary schools in Leeds. The city council gives considerable support to schools embarking on a travel plan including advice, materials and financial incentives (Leeds City Council School Travel Advisors, 2005). The latter can be invested in linked projects, and Meanwood School planned to set up a covered walking bus stop and a vegetable garden with the proceeds (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). The preparation of a travel plan required substantial consultation on stakeholder needs and reporting on current travel habits (Leeds City Council School Travel Advisors, 2005). The main outcomes from this process at Meanwood School were the walking bus (as requested by parents) and cycle training for older children (as requested by pupils) (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). My study focused on the walking bus as it was the most substantial attempt at practice change in the travel plan, and one that engaged the parent community in effecting change.

Due to the school’s geographical situation (at the end of a narrow no-through road) there were serious problems with congestion and road safety in the mornings. This was a very real concern for the practitioner who recounted a story of a recent near miss:
... the quantity of children and traffic, it’s just waiting for an accident. Two weeks ago we had a child who was split seconds away from being squashed on the road. He hadn’t looked, he just walked out... There is no pavement on the other side of the road, it’s just really hazardous. (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005)

These were the problems perceived as most important to resolve in the travel plan, and indeed the issue that was raised in the first place, although the environment and children’s health were also cited as motivations for change by the deputy head (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). The school had also been involved in a ‘healthy schools’ programme during the previous year which encourages children to make healthy food and lifestyle choices. The healthy schools programme was also a potential stimulus to change in children and parents’ choice of travel mode and may have affected the outcomes of the travel plan (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). Most participants (parents) see this initiative as an opportunity to change children’s practices, with the main motivation for involvement being to improve children’s health, and a secondary concern with road safety (Meanwood School Participants, 2005). As they explain:

I think it’s really important for kids to walk to school. I always have done. ... I think it’s more healthy for them and also I think it wakes them up in the morning (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2)

I like to think that they walk some of the way. That they get a little bit of exercise before they go into school, rather than just going from the house to the car into the classroom. (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 3)

Only one participant made a connection to reduced environmental impact as a result of the walking bus, and this is a rather underemphasised effect of the scheme among parents. The practice that these participants were attempting to change is children’s and parents’ mode choice in travelling to school. Given both parent and practitioner focus on child health and safety outcomes, the attempt to change practice did not involve a concurrent attempt by the community-based organisation to influence the environmental values or environmental knowledge of the participants.

The walking bus entails parents walking along the same route to school every day, and picking up children who live along this route on the way. The walking bus aimed to reduce the number of parents driving their children to school. As such, it also indirectly aimed to reduce the numbers of children travelling by car. The school had 214 pupils, and at the time of study about 40 children had signed up to join the walking bus scheme, and between 20 and 30 walked daily with the bus (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). The bus only operated in the morning, when it followed a set route with defined ‘stops’ to pick up children on the way to school. Volunteers involved in the walking bus were the parents of children attending the school. The
walking bus was organised by the deputy head teacher, but run by parents who committed to walking to school on specific days of the week with the bus. Members of the walking bus team worked together to get children safely to school in the mornings, but their involvement with each other ended here: this was a group formed to perform a specific task, and most parents had somewhere else to go after taking the children to school in the morning (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 1-4).

While the walking bus was requested by the parents during the school travel plan consultation, much of the organisation for the bus was taken on by the Deputy Head. This made her enthusiasm for the bus muted by the recognition of how much effort she had had to put in to bring it together:

… when you see them all walking down the road in the morning its brilliant, but it has just been a tremendous headache for me to organise… there was a point at the beginning of the summer, where I literally spent my first day back at school phoning parents saying, please can you do it, I’m really stuck, please don’t drop out. (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005)

Getting commitment from parents to walk on given days was the main difficulty as: “they want their children to be on it but they are not actually willing to do anything themselves.” (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). The deputy head saw this difficulty in recruiting volunteers as a general problem within the school.

In summary, the Meanwood School walking bus was a relatively simple attempt to change a specific practice, with no attempt to influence broader sustainability attitudes or awareness of participants. Its environmental goals were only one of a broader set of goals, including improving children’s fitness and road safety. The walking bus proved difficult to staff with volunteers.

4.3 Holy Trinity

This case was a project run by the Christian Ecology Group at Holy Trinity church in a market town in the north of England. At the time of study the Christian Ecology Group (CEG) had been active for about twelve years within this parish church in promoting environmental and ethical living within the church, congregation and townsfolk (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Data collection for the case was conducted between May 2006 and March 2007. The practitioners in this case were three church members who had set up and run the group on a voluntary basis, as well as the supportive rector of the church (an employee).

Holy Trinity is considered the main church of the town, as it is highly visible in its position at the top of the high street, and has a congregation of 200. The rector characterised the
church as fairly liberal: “not happy-clappy, or over formal, but middle of the road”, and as a result its members take a variety of perspectives on their faith (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Congregation members considered it a friendly and welcoming place, and some cited this as a reason why they joined the church (Holy Trinity Participants, 2006, 4 and 7).

Holy Trinity activities were overseen by the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the customary Church of England structure for managing church business. The PCC at Holy Trinity was supportive of the Christian Ecology Group, as was the rector (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). In recent years, the broader Church of England has also begun to take an interest in matters of environment, with key figures taking a stand, and a national campaign on carbon footprints (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006; Church of England, 2008).

There is also an ecumenical body, Eco-congregation, which encourages environmental awareness and actions within places of worship, and offers certification to those places of worship which achieve a certain standard (Ecocongregation, 2008). This reflects a growing interest in the role of religious organisations in environment.

The Christian Ecology Group was set up by the three practitioners in response to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development conference in Rio 1992. These three were passionate advocates of the link between religion and environment, and professed great dedication to environmental issues in a religious context (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). As the rector, who was active in the group, expressed it:

> My theology of incarnation is not just that in the one person, Jesus of Nazareth, but in all human beings, and I feel quite strongly in the landscape as well which is where a lot of my spirituality is located. Through the stuff of the rocks and streams and mountains and flowers and birds this mysterious thing called God is met. (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

The CEG consisted of a core of about six regular members (including practitioners) with four others joining on a less frequent basis. The group was open and outward looking, making alliances with connected organisations for work on particular projects (the local FE college, Oxfam shop and other places of worship in the area). Practitioners took a consciously positive approach to environmental issues, which they saw as important to encourage those who are not currently engaged (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). The group had no regular source of funding, and relied on money raised by members (for instance from cake-baking) and the hours given by members as volunteers. Holy Trinity church supported the CEG’s activities by providing paper for photocopying and other office facilities.

The CEG worked on various projects in and around the church to improve the environmental and ethical performance and understanding of the congregation and the
townsfolk. Broadly, the CEG’s work consisted of a series of activities on sustainable living directed at the congregation of Holy Trinity and the population of the town more generally. Activities included a fair trade fashion show, an extensive listings booklet and website for local environmental and ethical products and services (‘green pages’), and the sale of exclusively fair trade tea and coffee in the church (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). The CEG was also instrumental in organising the process towards eco-congregations certification, which the church completed in 2005 (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Alongside this more locally focused activity, the CEG organised the Earth Care day conference in 2004, bringing together people from the Christian community with an interest in ecology. Despite all this activity, the practitioners’ rather conservatively stated aim was “to try and make a difference by raising awareness” and they were reluctant to say that they were aiming to change practices, because they had no evidence that they had achieved that (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Underlying their projects, however, was a series of more substantive goals, including changing attitudes (in information given out on unfair trading in the Fair Trade fashion show), practice (in selling fair trade products in church) and promoting a deeper understanding of the connections between religion and sustainability (in incorporation of sustainability in church services) (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006).

The informal nature of the CEG, which relied entirely on volunteers, affected the nature of the activities that the group could run. The presence of a core group of enthusiasts, who set up and ensured the continuation of the CEG over the twelve years of its existence, was seen by practitioners as crucial (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Crucial, because the bonds between the group were very strong, and they had a shared understanding of the way that things work in the church:

I trust them, because we share so much. We don’t have to apologise for being cynical or doubting someone. We know what has happened in the past. I don’t think any one of us would have gone on single-handedly. (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

The practitioners thus drew on each others’ enthusiasm and strength to promote change within the church on environmental issues. Running a voluntary group is not without its problems, however. Practitioners noted the tendency for most of the work to fall to a small group of people as event deadlines get near and members’ other commitments get in the way:

The trouble is with groups like this, although we had lots of help from other people, at the crucial time the people who aren’t fully committed pull out. And that’s what happened... I’m not going to do anything like that again, because it will happen again (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)
This resulted in a hesitation to take on big projects, especially after one of the practitioners experienced ‘burn-out’, and after 12 years stepped down her involvement in the group (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006).

Practitioners perceived the group’s activities to have worked against the prevailing culture both in the church and in society at large, and this was not a straightforward process (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). One of the most striking features of the interview with practitioners was the perceived extent of members of the congregation’s opposition to CEG activities over the years, and the resulting stress that practitioners felt in dealing with this opposition (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). From the beginning the group experienced difficulties in persuading members of the congregation to participate in activities, sometimes despite the involvement of the Church of England hierarchy:

The first project we ever had was given to us by [the rector] who’d been sent a petition on climate change from the social responsibility people of the Church of England. So it had a respectable pedigree, but that didn’t make any difference. I can still remember having huge argumentative discussions with members of our congregation, choir and the lot as we tried to get them to sign this. (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

These difficulties diminished to some extent over time, with positive local press coverage, more substantive engagement of senior members of the Church of England in environmental issues, and a general increase in awareness of environmental issues across society helping to ameliorate the situation (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). The tension between members of the congregation and the CEG was still a cause of frustration for the practitioners, however, who found it hard to see progress:

Well we suggested recently that they could use fair trade sugar … they’ve discussed it and they’ll do it if it’s not too expensive. [emotional pause] I had to bite my tongue because you know that is not the point. You know we’re a fair trade church, I couldn’t believe it. (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

Tension arose from the disparity between the CEG’s priorities on sustainability and fair trade, and those of the rest of the volunteers working within the church, who as volunteers had no particular compulsion to cooperate with the CEG’s agenda. The connection between Holy Trinity’s mission as a church and issues of sustainability was not immediately apparent to all concerned. Those congregation members that did not see the relevance of this connection were unlikely to be affected by CEG activities. As one of the practitioners said: “if it’s not in their personal ethic then it’s very difficult to persuade them” (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Some of these people were also involved as volunteers in the more traditional functions of the church, and could obstruct CEG activities in their voluntary roles. While some active
members of the CEG took criticism of group activities with resignation (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1 and 8), others, especially the practitioners, were discouraged by the constant justification necessary to support proposals for change (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). The three practitioners had considered giving up their work as a result of opposition by members of the congregation.

While the involvement of the Church of England leadership is not a simple recipe for success, practitioners tied the increasing respectability of environmental and ethical issues in church to the work of leaders. Indeed, practitioners placed considerable emphasis on the importance of leadership from the church in legitimising their own work:

It’s helped a lot that we’ve had people like the Bishop of Liverpool giving a lead. That it’s coming from the centre. And I’ve discerned a slight change in some people’s attitudes. Now it’s respectable. (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

Leadership from above gave the CEG practitioners more perceived legitimacy in their attempts to lead within Holy Trinity on environmental issues (see quote above). This included the support of the Rector, as well as more senior figures in the church. It was indeed a change in leadership (the appointment of the current Rector) which originally helped to stimulate the foundation of the group. Practitioners reported a gradual change in perception of the work of the group:

I think when we started the group there was the idea that it was borderline paganism… it was worshiping the earth rather than creation (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

As church leaders became involved in environmental and ethical issues, congregation members were less likely to make negative connections between faith and ecology.

In summary, Christian Ecology Group work on sustainability required an alternative culture of ecological consciousness within Holy Trinity. This is because the ideas promoted by the group ran counter to those of some of the congregation, causing a cultural rift within the church. This manifests itself in discussions over the way the church is run, where volunteers do not always see environmental and ethical considerations as a priority. Circumstances were eased somewhat over time through the involvement of the Church of England leadership in green issues, and the continued support of the Rector. As with many voluntary organisations, the CEG has problems retaining members, particularly in busy times, leading to responsibility being taken on by a small group of members, who sometimes suffer as a consequence.
4.4 BTCV Green Gyms

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) runs a series of conservation activities for volunteers on a local, national and international scale. The Green Gym is one of these activities, which aims to combine healthy outdoor exercise with conservation and vegetable growing activities. This case looked at four Green Gym groups, three based in Wakefield and one in Reddish Vale, Stockport. The data collection for this case study took place from August 2006 to May 2008. The practitioners in this case were employed to run the Green Gyms, although the funding for Reddish Vale had run out and, as such, the practitioner there was a volunteer. Senior practitioners included the head of BTCV in Wakefield, and the national BTCV officer responsible for Green Gyms.

The Green Gym programme was instigated by a GP in Oxfordshire who saw a connection between the mental and physical ill-health of his patients and the potential for wellbeing offered by being in nature (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007). The Green Gym involved BTCV adapting existing conservation activities to incorporate goals on both participant health and on community cohesion (ibid.). The latter emphasis came from government and other funders’ priorities which often demanded that projects address issues of social deprivation alongside environmental and health goals (ibid.). In addition, it was connected to the availability of funds as the senior practitioner explained:

So basically you are tied to where the money is coming from. Local authorities might have a lot of money to spend on Wakefield because they are deprived areas and therefore they are keen to set up a Green Gym. If you wanted to set one up in say… Hertfordshire or something… it’s so much wealthier round there that no one is interested in pouring money into it. (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007)

The BTCV had to bid for funding for each project, and, as such, there was often a need to fulfil (multiple) funders’ objectives in setting up the projects (ibid.). For the Green Gyms, this funding paid the wages of the practitioner involved in each project, who led and organised activities for the group, and trained new members in the skills necessary to work in the gardens or in conservation. While Green Gyms usually started with a staff member leading activities, there was a strong emphasis on moving groups towards self-sufficiency, with the intention of setting up a group of volunteers to take over management of the group when funding runs out (ibid.). As the senior practitioner explained:

The idea is that we don’t find funding for ever and ever, but our job is really to set up the group for the good of the community and then the community continues to run it. (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007)
The activities under the Green Gym scheme were environment-related, and the practitioners involved in running Green Gyms often have a conservation background, but the gyms had strong obligations to meet multiple goals, with both health and social goals connected to their funding (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007). Indeed, the stated goals of the group were very broad, and do not have a strong emphasis on environmental learning. One of the group practitioners outlined her group aims as follows:

Firstly, obviously, is the health benefits that come from it, both physical and mental. It’s the benefits of working outdoors, doing gentle gardening exercise, or strenuous if you want. Getting the benefits from being out in the open which a lot of people don’t get these days. The social contact you get from it. The fact that you are meeting other people and having to work as a team, as well as the sitting down and having a tea break and chatting to people. There’s another aspect which is healthy eating. A lot of the produce that we actually get from the allotment the volunteers split between them and take home and eat. (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006)

In a sense the scheme targets the sustainability of the community in its broadest sense, rather than sustainability practices in particular. Members attended the gym as volunteers, but individuals’ development and wellbeing has as much a focus as the environmental goals set to grow vegetables or complete conservation activities. As such, the groups were not ‘task-oriented’, or indeed ‘environment-oriented’ but rather focused on enjoying the experience, being in nature, and interacting socially as the goals listed above suggest. Members were encouraged to do what they could, according to their physical fitness, inclination and capacity (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006). This marked a substantial difference in ethos to pure conservation groups which tend to be mainly trying to get the job done (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). Members of the groups under study were not the traditional BTCV membership who would likely have an existing interest in environmental or conservation issues. Indeed, only six of the 18 participants interviewed had heard of the BTCV before they got involved in the Green Gym.

As the two parts of this case study (Wakefield and Reddish Vale) were very different in character, they will be dealt with separately in the two sections below.

### 4.4.1 Wakefield Green Gyms

The Wakefield Green Gyms consisted of three separate groups which had taken on three plots of land in different parts of the city (two allotments and one plot next to a church and community centre). Volunteers grew vegetables and flowers as well as working on craft projects around the allotment or community garden. The garden itself was organic, and acted as a demonstration project that showed participants how gardening can work organically. It also introduced them to some of the basic ideas around growing plants and nature. The practitioner in
Wakefield also tried to incorporate environmental issues informally into her work (for instance using recycled materials to plant in, bringing up environment as a topic of conversation) although this was not a requirement of the scheme (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006). Each group had between 5 and 15 members.

Participants had been involved in the scheme for anything from 1 to 18 months. Eleven out of fifteen Wakefield participants interviewed were referred to the scheme by a health visitor, social worker, college (as work experience), doctor, or carer. The exceptions were two members with strong interest in environment or gardening who were looking for this kind of activity and two others that found the scheme through family or involvement with a connected group. In Wakefield it seemed that social services had realised that the Green Gym could represent a positive activity for their clients with learning difficulties to be involved in. As a result, a large proportion of members had learning difficulties or mental health problems, I estimated 13 out of 15 in this group based on personal observation. Note that it was inappropriate to ask respondents if they had learning difficulties or mental health problems, and not all respondents were particularly open about this. As many participants had been referred to the group, some were not particularly interested in gardening, rather attending the group for social or personal reasons. There was some evidence of members joining because they had social workers in common (Green Gym Participants, 2006, members 1, 2 and 3)

Due to the predominance of members with learning difficulties, the volunteers at Wakefield had different abilities to understand or contribute to the activities. As the practitioner put it:

One guy has trouble working a hosepipe, and it goes through from somebody with that level of ability through to somebody who you can say, ‘would you mind going and planting me some such and such’ and you know that you can leave them and they’ll go off for an hour or so and do whatever they doing and get on with it… There are also people coming in who have their own gardens, or allotments so those people are also helping teach other people how to do things. (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006)

Because of these different abilities among individuals involved, and the many other concerns of the participants given the deprived nature of the communities in which Wakefield Green Gyms operated, the level of learning possible among members was also varied. The practitioner in Wakefield saw the predominance of people with learning difficulties in one of her sites as a barrier to the group going self-sufficient, as: “they won’t have the organizational skills to take on something like this, and probably not the will to do it either” (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006). The senior practitioner of the scheme agreed (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007). Indeed, in the country at large, the Green Gym scheme tries to promote mixed groups which
allow for those with learning difficulties to be integrated into a larger group (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007).

Some of the members of the Wakefield Green Gyms with learning difficulties also had a limited capacity to take on sustainability practices. Participants that had learning difficulties were often not directly in control of aspects of their lives that have an impact on the environment. For instance, respondents often did not do their own food shopping or control their home environments, as either parents or carers took that responsibility (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12). In addition, tasks that might seem straightforward took on a greater complexity in the eyes of someone with learning difficulties. For instance, as one participant explained she needed special help in finding places:

So once they show me where [community garden] is I will be alright... But I have to be shown. They can not just explain it to me because I will get lost. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 5)

For many members in Wakefield, especially those who have exhausted the local educational system, the Green Gym was their only regular activity in the week (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14). Only one member was involved in other volunteering work (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15). Those members that attended other activities were in part time education, or following hobbies such as music or sport. None of the interviewees in Wakefield were in employment at the time they were interviewed, probably for reasons of mental health, learning difficulties, and with one participant in retirement. The members who had learning difficulties and who were relatively active (pursuing several hobbies or educational activities) were actively seeking out opportunities, or had family doing so (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 4 and 5 for instance).

BTCV had a presence in Wakefield, but moving from conservation projects to community projects meant establishing a new foothold in the community. This involved making partnerships with other organisations in order to persuade funders to back the bid, and to make more successful projects:

We’ve got to make these things work, so we’ve got to have people buying in. We are a big organization and fairly faceless. We don’t have a face in [Wakefield]... so we’ve got to use these local established routes who are local people, which is more than what we are (Green Gym Senior Practitioner (Wakefield), 2006)

In Wakefield, partnerships were made between the Green Gyms and a healthy living centre, church, allotment society, and local nursery, The group also worked less formally with
other groups and individuals: a local artist, youth groups, an over 55s group, the scouts, and BTCV groups from other areas (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006).

4.4.2 Reddish Vale Green Gym

Reddish Vale Green Gym was active in the park and nature area of Reddish Vale Country Park where the group performed a variety of activities including conservation tasks and helping to maintain a vegetable garden and orchard. The main focus of activities here was conservation and members were trained as part of the Green Gym, in tree and wildflower identification and various other nature management skills (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007).

At the time of the research the group had been running for five years, and had recently become a ‘self-sufficient’ Green Gym – no longer supported by BTCV funding. There were about 8 members, some of whom attended regularly some of whom did not. Many of the regular members had been involved in the group for several years (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). In Reddish Vale the regular members mostly lived outside the catchment area for the group (a social and economically deprived area), but were allowed to join while numbers were low (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 17, 18). The current practitioner could count only two out of six regular members that actually lived in the desired catchment area for the group (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). Members saw this as paradoxically inevitable given the deprivation in the area, as one volunteer put it:

There are so many other social problems in the Reddish Vale area, that it’s almost a luxury to worry about environmental problems, do you know what I mean? They’ve got too many other problems. Maybe drug related, making ends meet, malnutrition… (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

Members in Reddish Vale were also better educated and wealthier than the participants that BTCV would typically target through these schemes (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007).

The presence of a leader to run activities was important to many members of the Green Gym groups, who also emphasised the particular qualities of the leaders of the projects under study (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 4, 5; Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 17, 18). Importance of leadership was especially emphasised in the Reddish Vale group which had recently gone independent from the BTCV, and therefore no longer had a salaried leader. Members missed the leadership that this paid member of staff provided:

Basically because the girl that ran it was one of these people that… she was a magic person, you know what I mean, one of those people that you enjoy being with. She always made sure that everything was spot on… we turned up anyway just so she didn’t feel left out! (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)
The leader was valued both for organising the activities and for the type of person she was, with participants noting her inclusive approach to organising activities, her management of the other stakeholders connected with the group, her informal approach to each members’ needs, and her taking responsibility for needy volunteers so that other volunteers did not have to (Green Gym Participants, 2007; Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007).

This appreciation of leadership emerged from the process to become self-sufficient. Members were asked to take on roles that they are not entirely comfortable with given that all members originally joined the group as volunteers and there was no longer a paid position attached to leading the group (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16; Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). In addition, members of the group found the transition to self-sustainability difficult, as the quality of the experience was no longer as high as it was when a paid leader took charge of the group:

I really felt I enjoyed the support of the group and having a leader who would do all the admin and liaise with the park managers and sort out the tasks, the tools, responsibility for volunteers, that’s gone now, it’s fallen on the volunteers to organise that ourselves (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18)

Members believed that the emergence of a leader was not necessarily a natural process, particularly in a group that had existed for 5 years with a paid staff member. In addition, although members may seem well qualified to do the job (highly educated, working in positions of responsibility), one respondent alluded to hidden mental health problems for many members:

...if you’ve got a group, they might seem very capable, but you’ve got to know who the vulnerable members are don’t you... because you only actually know what people have allowed you to know. And mental illness... it’s so stigmatised that probably that’s the last thing anyone is going to tell you... (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

All participants at Reddish Vale stated that they wanted to volunteer as a break from the organisational roles they had in the rest of their lives (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 17, 18). After the period of study, the Reddish Vale group decided to leave the Green Gym scheme and become an independent group (Green Gym Senior Practitioner, 2007). Acting independently required less paperwork and recruitment than acting under the Green Gym scheme.

In contrast to Wakefield, the Reddish Vale Green Gym attracted few people with learning difficulties. The members found this a relief, because of the responsibilities they took on in maintaining the group. Members explicitly said that they did not want to take on the responsibility of incorporating members with learning difficulties into their group (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16; Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). This is not to say that the group rejects
members with problems, indeed both the current practitioner and some of the members saw one of the main functions of the group as supporting people through difficult times:

We had lots of people that came that were alright but that had like … had been damaged in life. They’ve had problems and things like that you know. It’s helped them immensely. We’ve had loads of people like that… that have come here really upset with the world. But they’ve been here 12 months, 18 months and it’s amazing how they come round. Working with people and being outside, and being involved with a group that cares. (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)

While the group was not set up as a support group, it seemed both to attract and help people at a low ebb in their lives (this was particularly notable for Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17). Participants and the practitioner in this group referred to it as ‘the family’, as members helped each other out whenever they could (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16; Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). There was a particularly strong bond between members, and interviewees talked emotionally about the connections they had with each other. As one of them explains, her enjoyment of the group is about: “the crack the... funny things that we’ve done and the lovely things that we’ve done together... I mean we are all friends now.” (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17).

4.4.3 Summary of Green Gym

The Green Gym case could almost be treated as two cases, as there were substantial differences between the participants and activities in Wakefield and Reddish Vale. In particular, the types of participant present in each case afforded each group different capacities for action. Community-based organisations are, in the voluntary nature of their activities, reliant on the skills and capacities of the volunteers that are present. This has produced very different outcomes in the Green Gym cases discussed above, as will be shown in Chapter 6. The Green Gym scheme was a central thread that united the two locations, however, and the focus on multiple goals (health, community and environment) and emphasis on members’ personal fulfilment alongside community work, made the two sub-cases similar. In addition, both had an emphasis on working in partnership with other community groups, in order to draw on complementary expertise in connected organisations which allowed multiple goals to be reached.

4.5 Women’s Institute Ecoteams

In this case study I looked at three Women’s Institutes (WI) in North Lincolnshire and Worcestershire and their implementation of the Ecoteams programme promoted by the National Federation of Women’s Institutes (NFWI). The data collection for the case took place from June 2007 to April 2008. The three Ecoteams that made up this study will be referred to as North
Lincolnshire, Worcestershire 1 and Worcestershire 2. I talked to three practitioners in this study: the senior practitioner (an employee of the NFWI who ran the 90@90 project on the organisation’s behalf), and two local practitioners (volunteer Women’s Institute members that set up Ecoteams in their own Women’s Institute groups). I also make use of participant interviews in this summary.

For the NFWI, the Ecoteams programme was part of a larger initiative to celebrate the institute’s 90th birthday called ‘90@90’ (WI Senior Practitioner, 2007). This consisted of a series of projects aimed at promoting sustainable consumption among Women’s Institute members. The 90@90 initiative emerged from a consultative process within the Women’s Institute which asked members to come up with an issue of importance, to help to mark this milestone. Projects under 90@90 include Ecoteams, local food initiatives, composting and transport projects. For the senior practitioner responsible for 90@90, the project was symptomatic of the nature of the organisation, which has a long history of engagement in environment and community issues (WI Senior Practitioner, 2007). As she explained:

We have environmental resolutions going back to 1926 … the first one was about cleaning up the sea... There always has been that… community focus, but that involves economic, social and environmental issues. They have always been aware that there is a connectedness between the three. (WI Senior Practitioner, 2007)

Practitioners setting up their own Ecoteams saw less of an entrenched connection with environmental issues. Since this was a voluntary organisation with members’ participation based on their interests and goodwill, any activities on sustainability happened as a result of individual members taking on a particular project, albeit sometimes initiated by the national federation. As one of the local practitioners put it:

I can’t speak for the WI’s themselves... some might do some recycling but… there’s no concerted effort… Any initiatives that come from national are supposed to trickle down to all WI’s, whether they do them or not or whether they hear of them or not is a different matter... (Women’s Institute Practitioner 2, 2006)

As such, the involvement of local Women’s Institutes in the 90@90 initiative was resourced by the NFWI but ultimately depended on individuals or groups within local chapters being willing to take a lead.

I chose to focus on the Ecoteams project in particular because it met more success for the Women’s Institute than some of the other projects set up under 90@90 (the senior practitioner advised me that this was the best case study). Ecoteams consists of a four month process where a small group of people meet every month to discuss an issue relating to how their
lives impact on the environment, around the core topics of energy, waste, water, transport and shopping. A set of resources is provided at the beginning of the programme, and members can chose how they use those resources, and what steps they take (Global Action Plan, 2006; WI Senior Practitioner, 2007). Incidentally the Ecoteams programme is one of the most studied in the literature, and a major longitudinal study by Staats et al in the Netherlands has found considerable and lasting changes in people’s behaviours as a result of the process (Staats et al., 2004). Ecoteams is generally considered a best practice for stimulating change in small groups.

The local practitioners had a common conception of sustainability practice in relation to their work on Ecoteams. Practitioners emphasised the benefits to co-members of being involved, the relatively unchallenging nature of the exercise, and the importance of making incremental practice changes:

- It’s not going to be hard work, there’s no pressure, we’ll meet once a month so it’ll be a social thing and along the way you’ll save some money if you manage to cut down on your fuel consumption (Women's Institute Practitioner 1, 2006)

- I knew that I was pretty good and the results show that I was even before I started …but I made enormous improvements, anybody can, however good you are (Women's Institute Practitioner 2, 2006)

This positive approach was symptomatic of the general tone of Women’s Institute work with Ecoteams. The North Lincolnshire practitioner thought that such a positive approach was what had enabled her to recruit from her own Women’s Institute group, as she had a fairly enthusiastic reception. The positive approach also led to some issues being left out of the exercise as they were considered too challenging. For instance, change in transport practice was not considered by the Worcestershire group as it was too challenging for the practitioner herself: “I think I would find it difficult to make a convincing argument about that because I’d feel hypocritical” (Women's Institute Practitioner 2, 2006).

The Women’s Institute groups approached the programme in two ways: in North Lincolnshire and Worcestershire 2 members were recruited from local Women’s Institutes, in Worcestershire 1 members were recruited more broadly, with an eye to developing a series of environmental initiatives within the county. All Ecoteams were made up of between 5 and 8 members, and those that recruited locally were addressing WI group memberships of about 30 in each local group. The practitioner in Worcestershire 1 (Women's Institute Practitioner 2, 2006) had a long-standing interest in and understanding of environmental issues, with ambitions to make a more general impact on her county’s members. As such, the Worcestershire 1 group was selected from active Women’s Institute members who were well networked within the county, rather than from ordinary Women’s Institute members (as in North Lincolnshire and
Worcestershire 2). The reasoning behind this selection was to run the Ecoteams project with Women’s Institute members who had a network of contacts beyond the original group, to whom they could spread enthusiasm for the scheme. Following the initial project which is reported here, about eight more Ecoteams were run within the county (including Worcestershire 2), mainly within Women’s Institutes with which one of the members of the original team had made contact (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5).

In all groups the leaders were active members of their Women’s Institute, had held official positions and had been involved at county level. It is significant that all groups had a leader that was well respected by those participants interviewed. Leaders were referred to by their members as people who are competent and motivational and inspired them to join in. The first quote here was in answer to a question about why the person decided to join the Ecoteam:

I know it sounds daft but I suppose really it was to please [Practitioner 1]! She works so hard for the WI and she is so persuasive. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3)

It is good to have someone like [Practitioner 2], who is so focused and challenging, and good at organising things ... yes you need somebody like that. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

I sat next to [Practitioner 3] on the coach journey down to the AGM last year in London and we spoke about it and she convinced me that it was a good idea... she gave me the idea that it would be a good idea to join her group which I did. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 8)

In addition to this apparent importance of a leader figure, the fact that the project was supported by the NFWI was important to those involved. Many members had confidence in NFWI initiatives to instigate change (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2, 3, 4 and 5), and, as such, were happy to be associated with the initiative. Members were also very positive about the voice of the Women’s Institute on environmental issues within Britain. In a statement typical of the members who noted the Women’s Institute’s impact, one participant said: “it is the largest women’s organisation in the country... If we feel strongly enough about something it does change.” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5).

This links with another feature in common for Women’s Institute members which was that they felt that other members were ‘like-minded’ and, as such, that the Ecoteams process was a rather unthreatening one since it involved talking with people like them (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3, 4 and 5). In essence there was a strong and positive culture surrounding Women’s Institute activities which enabled members to embrace change. In addition, the senior practitioner believed that members trust information provided by the NFWI, which they might not trust from other sources:
They really wanted to learn from authoritative sources... They didn’t trust the
government, they didn’t necessarily trust environmental charities unless they
were members of them... The information is actually coming from us. So they
would trust this credible and reputable source. (WI Senior Practitioner, 2007)

Neither of the practitioners had great difficulties recruiting members for the groups.
According to practitioners, members that did not join the project often thought they were ‘doing
enough already’ (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006; Women's Institute Practitioner 2,
2006). This may be justified by the results of a larger evaluation study run by Women’s Institute,
which found that members joining the Ecoteams (admittedly not a representative sample of the
Women’s Institute) had much lower waste and energy use than the general public (National
Federation of Women’s Institutes, 2008). As the senior practitioner put it “I think our members
don’t get enough credit for actually having a lot of the knowledge already” (WI Senior
Practitioner, 2007). This connects to a broader cultural feature of WI members: their ethos of
avoiding waste. The senior practitioner explained this as a generational culture:

I think a lot of our older members who lived through the war rationing, they
don’t produce waste, it’s not one of their values. They really value everything
and reuse and recycle and don’t shop in supermarkets with loads of food
packaging, they’ve just always had that awareness. (WI Senior Practitioner,
2007)

While the Ecoteams were initially intended as a one-off programme, various spin-offs
resulted from the initiative in the cases under study. These included the leader of North
Lincolnshire being consulted as someone with an interest in environment, and being involved in
other environmental projects as a result. The Worcestershire 2 group organised an environment
day for local Women’s Institute members. The Worcestershire 1 group also organised an
environment day, and intended to implement a carbon pledge initiative within the county led by
the practitioner of the group (Women's Institute Practitioner 2, 2006).

In summary, as a national organisation NFWI is familiar with environmental and
community issues as a result of its long history in campaigning and acting on these matters.
Local Women’s Institute groups under study for this thesis had less of a history of action in this
area. However, the Women’s Institute members were a fairly unified group, who had similar
demographic profiles, and values, in particular an ethos of avoiding waste. As such, the
Ecoteams activity was positive for Women’s Institute members who found themselves to be
among likeminded people. Practitioners are respected within the groups for their enthusiasm and
leadership skills, and given the bottom-up nature of the activity, practitioners were a crucial
presence for instigating change.
4.6 Bollington Carbon Revolution

The last case study was the Bollington Carbon Revolution project, a project which attempted to reduce the carbon footprint of the town of Bollington in Cheshire. The data collection for the case study took place from April to July 2008, and was a verification case study, intended to verify emerging theories and results of the other cases. The only difference here is that data collection was less substantial than in other studies. Practitioners in this case were two volunteering members of the organising committee and Senior Practitioners were volunteers in the local Civic Society (the parent organisation).

The Carbon Revolution is a project which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of the town of Bollington. The name ‘Bollington Carbon Revolution’ makes an implicit link to the town’s heritage as a product of the industrial revolution. There are several other projects around the UK in the same model. The most well-known of these is that in the village of Ashton Hayes in Cheshire, which has had substantial media coverage, as well as academic attention (Alexander et al., 2007; Charnock, 2007). Following Ashton Hayes, many other community groups have taken the initiative to set up carbon neutral place projects. As in Bollington, these groups tend to be grassroots-led, growing from the ideas of a few local enthusiasts who capture the imagination of the community. There are also connections here with the transition towns movement (Transition Towns Network, 2008).

Bollington is a small town (population 7,300) on the edge of Macclesfield and the Peak District (Bollington Civic Society, 2008). Bollington Carbon Revolution is a sub-group of the Bollington Civic Society, an organisation that has been active in the community since 1964 (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). The senior practitioners in the case (from the Civic Society) claimed that Bollington has a highly active community sector, with regular activities involving many volunteers (ibid.). The Bollington Festival, for instance, a music event held every four years, in its last iteration (2005) attracted 750 volunteers and 10,000 spectators (ibid.). The town therefore has a tradition of community activism, one of the practitioners referred to it being in the ‘premiere league’ of towns with active community groups (ibid.). The practitioners were proud of the level of activism: “The festival’s amazing ... a tenth of the community are drawn into planning the whole thing…” (ibid.). According to some members, this tradition is not held by the whole community, as a large proportion of the community is not engaged in voluntary activity (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4; Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). Nevertheless, the Bollington Carbon Revolution group was influenced by its parent organisations’ pride in a volunteering culture, and felt as if it was building on a solid tradition of community volunteering (Bollington Carbon Revolution
Chapter 4: Community Context

Practitioners, 2008). As one practitioner put it: “we got a lot of direction from [the Civic Society] in terms of how to position ourselves in the community and links and that sort of thing…” (ibid.).

The civic society movement was started in response to decline in both the physical and social fabric of communities, as one of the practitioners explains:

Twenty years after the last war when this country was at a bit of a low point ... the community structure in towns like Bollington had fallen apart. Whereas pre war it had been very, very close... big roads were being built, huge areas of cities being knocked down and all the rest of it, and the Civic Society was born out of that. (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

Given this concern with the built environment, practitioners saw a clear connection between the Civic Society and sustainability issues, particularly issues of sustainable community (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). Alongside the Carbon Revolution subgroup in the Civic Society there were also sub-groups to run a discovery centre, and to manage the future of an abandoned church. The Civic Society was also involved in the town planning process. Indeed, the Civic Society initiated the Carbon Revolution group by publishing an article in the town magazine asking for people to join a group to work on climate change issues, and since has supported the group by advising on funding and other organisational support (including some financial support) (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). According to senior practitioners the Civic Society has a good reputation among local government stakeholders: “the town council frequently asks us to put representatives on the council committees because they value our input” (ibid.). This led to the society being consulted on many issues, and may have impacted on perceptions of the Carbon Revolution as a project under the Civic Society’s remit. It was certainly felt by Carbon Revolution practitioners to lend legitimacy to their activities, as one practitioner put it: “We’re not just some sort of random group that’s disconnected from everybody…or just a bunch of Greenies!” (ibid.).

The Carbon Revolution’s emphasis was on future planning, and making strategic alliances with other stakeholders, including local government and other third sector organisations. The group had also run various activities, including tree-planting, running Ecoteams, film showings including the Inconvenient Truth, and running stalls at community events. One of the practitioners saw this as treading a fine line between action and planning:

It’s quite a challenge when you start a new group especially when you’re not experienced in running community groups because you’ve got twenty people that want to do something but you’ve then got to make that into something and organise all those people, so you have to do something quite quickly to keep everyone interested (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)
The group trained several community members to run Ecoteams within Bollington. The group hoped that Ecoteams would eventually tie in with an ‘eco-audit’ scheme which involves households being visited by an auditor who would help them to reduce their environmental footprint. The Carbon Revolution had won grants of a total of £11,000 (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). £5,000 of this was to investigate the possibility of a water turbine in the town. Practitioners were rather unspecific about which precise sustainability practices they were targeting though their actions, although the connection with climate change points more strongly to energy use and transport practices. Two of the overall goals of the group as stated in their action plan hint at a climate-specific conception of sustainability practice change:

To educate and raise the awareness within our community of the actions we can all take to slow down climate change... To support Bollington on its journey to reduce carbon emissions (Bollington Carbon Revolution, 2007)

However, many of the activities pointed to a broader set of practices than just those that connect to climate change (including plans for a community garden, the Ecoteams project).

There were around eight active members of the Carbon Revolution committee, and events and activities had involved between 5 (Ecoteams) and 60 (film showings) people, although the full population of Bollington (7,300) is the ultimate target of the group. Members were relatively young and had professional connections with environment, with five of the group in their 20s and 30s working as environmental professionals (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). Those group members that were not environmental professionals brought other skills and understanding that were put to use in group activities, including, for instance, the communication skills of an ex-journalist. The lead practitioner saw this very positively: “the strength of our group is that everyone is a professional so they all bring different skills and conduct themselves in a professional manner” (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). For group members then, professionalism was a central feature of the way that they characterise their ability to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of the town. Most members were not involved in other voluntary work. There were numerous friendship connections between participants, and several participants had partners in the group. One participant even came from a 40 minute drive away to join the Ecoteams because of her friendship with a practitioner.

One particularly notable feature of the Bollington case was the extent to which members value the opportunity to translate their professional knowledge and skills into the community. In effect, members recognised the community as an arena in which they were empowered to act in contrast to other areas of their lives. As one practitioner said:
There are certain sorts of people ... who may get frustrated sometimes with their work you know with trying to get things done through their work, they actually think ‘I could get a lot more done voluntarily in my own community using my own professional skills…’ (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

Perhaps in connection to their professional backgrounds, the Carbon Revolution group took a highly strategic approach to their work. Most of these early years of the project were spent determining the group’s strategy, setting the scope of the project and only beginning to design and run activities, which was quite unusual in comparison to the other community projects in this study. The different dynamics of the voluntary sector were sometimes surprising and difficult for practitioners who have had to reduce expectations of the group when activities do not move as fast as they would have in a professional context (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). The model example of Ashton Hayes also proved difficult to live up to, and the speed at which this sister project has evolved has not been replicated in Bollington, due to more limited (human) resources being available. The group’s strategic approach did not suit all members, and there was some tension between the need to plan for the future and to act now to show the town what the group stands for:

But the problem there is you’ve got fifteen, twenty people that all want something now and then you’re saying actually no we’re going to plan for the next two years, you’re going to instantly pretty quickly go down from twenty down to about well one or two ... and that was really evident when it got to April/May and we still hadn’t really done anything and people were saying well what exactly are we, what am I spending my time on here? People need something tangible to say yeah we’ve done that ... so it’s a really delicate balance. (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

Part of the group’s strategy involved making contact with other stakeholders in the group’s work. Early in the group’s existence the practitioners identified key potential partners, including the local councils and other non-governmental groups in Bollington, and approached them for help. As one of the practitioners explained: “We just said this is what we’re doing what do you think? And they almost all of them came back with ways that they could support us” (ibid.). The county council asked to join the group’s committee indicating their recognition of the value of the work of the Carbon Revolution. As a result of working with these partners, the Carbon Revolution has begun to change the opportunities available to townsfolk. In particular, the group secured a substantial amount of grant funding from Macclesfield Borough Council for residents of Bollington to insulate their houses (£200 per household) through this kind of partnership.

In summary, Bollington is a place with a strong tradition of community action. The volunteers on this project, however, are new to volunteering in the community, and, as such,
have had to learn fast about the dynamics of voluntary work. Their emphasis on professionalism is interesting, and probably resulted in a more strategic process than in some of the other groups, with as much emphasis on planning for the future as on action. As a result, the activities that the group ran were rather slow in evolving, and a more substantial programme will probably emerge as the group develops.

4.7 Analysis: the importance of social context in changing member practice

The research question which is of particular relevance to this chapter asks ‘What is the capacity for community-based initiatives on sustainability to change member practice?’. Project circumstances have been outlined by case above, but there is scope for generalisation here, given the variety of cases examined, and the occurrence of some factors across several cases. The main point I make in this analysis is to emphasise the importance of the social context in which each project attempts to change member practice. The projects under investigation exist within a social (or community) context which has an important impact on the experience of project participants and practitioners, as well as on the design of the projects concerned. In this analysis, then, I address the social context of organisations, projects and members and establish how this shapes the role of the community-based organisation in influencing participants’ sustainability practice.

Having presented the data on the activities that these organisations offer in the case study descriptions above, in this analysis the understanding of how social context affects participants’ practice amounts to the first theoretical contribution of the thesis. Here, I link back to ideas from the theory of practice outlined in the literature review (see 2.2.2). In particular by looking at what these organisations can actually change for participants, I establish how participants’ choice sets are altered by membership of community-based organisations. In practice theory terms this amounts to understanding the community-based organisation as a new structure which is added to the ‘multiplicity of structures’ that guide practice (Sewell, 1992). Sewell sees this as one of the key ways in which structures can change practice (ibid.).

In the literature review I presented various ways of characterising social context, or structure, in practice theory. Giddens, for instance, uses the terms ‘rules’ and ‘resources’ (Giddens, 1984). Rules here relate to the accepted forms of social conduct which Southerton et al., in their work on constraints to individual agency, would call norms of social interaction: in other words people’s (often collaborative) understandings of how it is appropriate to behave (Southerton et al., 2004b). Giddens defines resources as structural properties that are drawn upon and reproduced by agents. Southerton et al. use Bourdieu’s definition of economic, social and
cultural resources as well as identifying another constraining factor in the material and infrastructural arrangements which someone inhabits (Southerton et al., 2004b).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 4.1 Contextual factors affecting the capacity for community-based organisations to encourage sustainability practices among participants.

In the context of community-based organisations attempting to influence their members’ sustainability practices, and in particular in the case studies outlined above, some particular structural elements emerged as part of the qualitative analysis process. I categorised these elements into cultural rules, and organisational, infrastructural, and participant resources. These structural features are described visually in Figure 4.1, a diagram which will evolve further in Chapter 8. How the diagram came into being will become apparent in the more detailed discussion of rules and resources that follows. I use a different categorisation system to either Southerton et al. or Giddens above in order to more accurately reflect the evidence of structural influence in my data on this particular type of intervention. The categorisation still owes much to the work of these two authors, however, as I believe is apparent from the explanations of each category below. The four categorisations have the following significance:
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

- **Cultural rules** are the norms of social conduct that govern a participant’s sustainability practices. They include the nature of a participant’s understanding of sustainability practices in the context of a community-based organisation’s activities, and in relation to their community more generally.

- **Organisational resources** are all the resources in play that stem from organisations within the community. This includes leadership, the act of getting people together, partnerships between organisations, the legitimacy offered by organisations and financial and organisational resources.

- **Infrastructural resources** are the material arrangements which pertain in the particular community in question. This includes all infrastructures which affect sustainability practice (e.g. transport systems, energy systems, shops). It also includes new information, services or facilities that are offered by the community-based organisations to their participants, and that allow participants to take on sustainability practices.

- **Participant resources** are the skills and time that the participant makes available to the community-based organisation to be involved in, and to help develop sustainability practice projects. This is bounded by the nature of participants as volunteers, and by the kinds of resources that each participant has available to them.

Rules and resources are sometimes affected by a community-based organisation’s activities. I will discuss each set of rules or resources in turn below. For each set, I will explain how these rules and resources are used and created in the context of community-based organisations attempting to change their participants’ sustainability practices, and how existing rules and resources affect attempts to change practice.

### 4.7.1 Cultural rules

These projects are trying to bend or create new cultural rules within the communities they serve. In summary: two manifestations of this are seen in community-based organisation attempts to frame their activities using community narratives, and community-based organisation attempts to frame their action for sustainable living as positive. These attempts to change cultural rules are not always successful, and some projects come up against opposition, while others are able to integrate sustainability and a positive approach more easily. A summary of the cultural rules findings for each case is given in Table 4.1.

Projects legitimize their activities by framing them within central narratives in their community’s self-image. In a sense, practitioners and participants in these projects seem to understand their work as embedded within their particular community. Alternatively this could be seen as practitioners attempting to embed the projects in the communities they are serving. A
similar connection was seen in the literature, where Michaelis noted the importance of a link between the organisations’ purpose and environmental issues (Michaelis, 2002). In my data I saw organisations making these links on the community’s behalf, and from fairly varied starting points. For instance, in its name the Bollington Carbon Revolution makes an explicit link to the community’s historic origins as a hub of the industrial revolution, reframing the environmental challenge of climate change as an opportunity for the community in the same way that the industrial revolution was widely considered. The Green Gym projects framed their conservation activities as an opportunity for skills development and social interaction in extremely deprived communities. In some ways this seems like a simple survival strategy, given the difficulties (and ethics) of promoting sustainability practices to people with very limited economic resources such as those involved in the green gym. It is also likely to be the way that this community can conceive of sustainability – a future where opportunities and resources for their members are more plentiful. The Women’s Institute activities also explicitly connect their ‘waste not’ ethos and the traditional practices associated with this ethos, to an environmentalist agenda, thus framing itself and its members as part of the solution. Again this relates to the nature of the group’s members who talk about this ethos as resulting from their age, and rural upbringing.

Table 4.1 Summary of the way that cultural rules are used in different cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Use of Cultural Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>None noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Embedding idea of sustainability within the community (links between sustainability and religion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a positive association with sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divided culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gyms</td>
<td>Embedding idea of sustainability within the community (opportunity for skills development and social interaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a positive association with sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unified culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Embedding idea of sustainability within the community (linking with ‘waste-not’ ethos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a positive association with sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unified culture (complements sustainability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington</td>
<td>Embedding idea of sustainability within the community (history of industrial revolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a positive association with sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divided culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the substantial differences between the communities here, and between the narratives that they tie their projects to, there are likely to be many more ways in which to link in
such projects with broader cultural trends in different types of community. Certainly the tendency to link sustainability projects with other broader community narratives and goals resulted in projects having a broad scope, and generating their own locally specific understandings of community and sustainability. These attempts by practitioners to embed their activities in their respective communities amount to what Pawson would call a ‘folk-theory’ about the way that such projects should be run (Pawson, 1995). It is not clear from the cases above why people feel the need to embed projects or see them as embedded, but it is likely to be a means of legitimising activities. The idea of linking sustainability projects to other agendas is something that is encouraged by government, and considered an important contextual factor in parts of the literature (Environ, 1996; Howard et al., 2005; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). A side effect here is that in some projects with multiple agendas, the sustainability agenda became so marginal that participants did not connect it with the activity in question. This was most visible in the Meanwood School case, where the walking bus was conceived of as a sustainability project by Leeds City Council, but among participants focused on road safety and congestion concerns in connection with the school’s locality. Despite considerable environmental impacts (reduced car use) Meanwood School participants did not conceive of the project as environmental, and, as such, it did not impact on their cultural rules relating to sustainability.

As well as attempting to embed sustainability into narratives of community, some of these organisations were attempting to create a positive feeling around sustainability. This emphasis on a positive approach to sustainability was also mentioned in the literature (Church and Elster, 2002; Michaelis, 2002). This amounts to creating an understanding of sustainability being a positive thing to do in reaction to the assumption that living sustainably will cost more and be inconvenient. Participants and practitioners in several groups felt that their involvement in community-based sustainability activities was accessible, and unthreatening. Some examples from the Women’s Institute, Bollington and Green Gym follow (note in the first example the practitioner is referring to an experience at a conference which she brought to the group):

There was something that she said, I wrote it down: ‘Be part of the solution instead of part of the problem’. I came away with that so for anyone who has any doubts I say well why not be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006)

Anything we did was very accessible... I think sometimes my encounters with people who are very environmentally aware in the past, I felt a bit intimidated by them, and felt really guilty. Sometimes people who are involved in that kind of stuff, can be ... very, sort of, ‘holier-than-thou’... (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)
It seemed like something that was quite...small scale and quite a friendly situation...just a small group of people getting together and seeing what changes you can make (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3).

The second quotation here reports negative previous encounters with environmentalists which were not replicated in the context of the Green Gym. As such, the Green Gym activities do not stimulate feelings of guilt or intimidation, which is quite important for this unengaged respondent. The third quotation is from a Bollington respondent who is also not actively engaged in pro-environmental behaviour at the start of the project. This respondent later referred to her experience in the Bollington Ecoteam as a ‘non-intimidating environment’ (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3).

There are limits to the power of these organisations to change culture, however, and indeed attempts to embed sustainability into a community’s narrative can be problematic. This is particularly noticeable at Holy Trinity. The practitioners have struggled against a hostile counter-culture to the one promoted by the CEG, despite the Church’s support for their activities (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006). Members of the church do not always want to make the connection between environment and religion. While this group started with a positive attitude to community practice change it has been difficult to maintain. As one of the practitioners puts it:

Although I am very negative about things, I think it is useful to look back over what you have achieved because then that does give you say... ‘oh yeah we did have that conference, yeah, we did do that’, that’s quite positive really (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

In contrast to the explicitly hostile culture at Holy Trinity, in Bollington there were divisions between participants with different opinions on the approach of the groups to sustainability issues. One participant here challenged the way that the group approached certain activities which he did not see as appropriate. This participant had been at an event where the group worked out people’s carbon footprints in what he felt to be a secretive way:

Frankly it was very superficial and it wasn’t really a very satisfactory exercise, certainly to anybody with any academic background ... they wouldn’t tell us what weighting factors they were applying, they wouldn’t tell us how they were calculating the thing ... it just wasn’t realistic at all... they seem to put a lot more weight on air journeys than anything else ... some people have business commitments (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4)

In this, and several other comments, the participant questions the specific decisions made by the group, usually from a ‘rationalist’ perspective, implying that the group is not meeting his high standards when they measure environmental impacts, and instigate projects.
This participant had a different viewpoint both on the 'right' way to do things and the nature of sustainability to the other members of the group, for instance in their 'putting a lot more weight' on air travel above (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4). Interestingly, this kind of conflict is not something that comes up very often in the literature. Indeed, I noted that the literature suggested that a practice should be culturally and socially acceptable to members of a group (Georg, 1999; Hobson, 2001). Here, it is apparent that that culturally and socially acceptable might be difficult to define within a group.

In other groups the culture was not so divided, in particular the Green Gym and Women’s Institute. The Green Gym projects were helped by the uncontroversial nature of their activities, which promote an interest in conservation and nature, rather than wholesale revisions to personal practice. The Women’s Institute did tackle sustainability practice head on, but within a culture which is highly conducive to environmental or ethical practices, given the organisation’s long history of interest in the environment. Both the Women’s Institute Ecoteams and Green Gym activities involved only those who want to be involved, with no activities targeted at other members of the community, or of the wider group (Women’s Institute). In addition both Women’s Institute and Green Gym groups were relatively homogeneous in socio-demographic terms (see 3.4.4), resulting in a friendly environment, where members felt relatively comfortable in engaging with each other. These are considerable differences to both Holy Trinity and the Bollington Carbon Revolution, which are more likely to face opposition given that their target audience is a large and diverse population.

For me, this discussion brings to mind the words of Burgess et al. in their discussion of sustainable consumption:

> It is asking too much of the consumer to adopt a green lifestyle unless there is a social context which gives green consumption greater meaning. (Burgess et al., 2003, p.285)

In effect many of the projects under study are attempting to create a social context which allows such ‘greater meaning’ in sustainable consumption. They do this by tying sustainability to a community narrative and constructing a positive feeling around sustainability. They are in turn limited by their own cultural context. When acting within a society which has a culture of consumerism these groups can only go so far towards giving meaning to participants’ sustainability practices.

### 4.7.2 Organisational resources

The resources that the community-based organisation and its parent and connected organisations offer were seen by practitioners to be crucial in providing capacity to deliver
projects that address participants’ sustainability practices. Here, organisational capacity was increased as a result of the resources offered by parent and connected organisations, including financial support, legitimacy, and partnerships for events and projects. In addition, the importance of leadership from both parent organisations and community-based organisations was emphasised by participants and practitioners. Finally, the very act of bringing people together and engaging them in sustainability projects represented an organisational resource of value in affecting participants’ sustainability practices. A summary of the use of organisational resources in the five cases is given in Table 4.2.

### Table 4.2 Summary of the way that organisational resources are used in different cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Use of organisational resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>Accessing resources for the organisation (training, organisational skills of the practitioner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing leadership (parent organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing participants together (limited cohesion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Accessing resources for the organisation (office supplies, legitimacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating partnerships to broaden resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing leadership (practitioners, parent organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing participants together (moderate cohesion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gyms</td>
<td>Accessing resources for the organisation (salaried project leader, allotments to work on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating partnerships to broaden resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing leadership (practitioners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing participants together (strong cohesion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Accessing resources for the organisation (training, Ecoteams information, legitimacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing leadership (practitioners, parent organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing participants together (strong cohesion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington</td>
<td>Accessing resources for the organisation (grant funding, legitimacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating partnerships to broaden resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing leadership (parent organisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing participants together (strong or moderate cohesion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the cases under study accessed some kind of material resources from parent organisations to engage in the activities they undertook. Such resources varied considerably from case to case. For the Green Gym projects, BTCV funded a salaried project leader (because the Green Gyms were based in deprived areas), the Meanwood School and Women’s Institute projects had access to training and other facilities, Bollington Carbon Revolution accessed grant
funding, and Holy Trinity had more general support including office supplies. In addition to this material support, the backing of parent organisations gave legitimacy to their work, especially for bottom-up projects (Women’s Institute, Bollington and Holy Trinity). The importance of this kind of support has been noted in the literature (Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). Financial support was mostly available on a project basis, and not usually directly from the parent organisation, and this sometimes caused problems. The Green Gym projects investigated here, for instance, would eventually run out of funding, and neither Wakefield nor Reddish Vale groups had capacity to either replace the project leader or find volunteers to take on their role.

This issue of funding is raised in the literature, mainly in that projects tend to have difficulties accessing funding (Church and Elster, 2002). From my research it seems that funding is more readily available where the issues addressed tie in directly to local government objectives, and to matters currently high on the political agenda. For instance, in the Meanwood School and Bollington Carbon Revolution projects, local councils either stimulated or supported activities which are seen to directly address problems of concern to them (transport congestion and climate change).

The support of parent organisations was often complemented with links to connected organisations which allow groups to achieve their objectives. These connected organisations often have the same kinds of objectives, but with a different initial focus on the problem. Such partnerships were also raised in the literature as an important resource (Alexander et al., 2007). Here, partnerships seemed designed to take advantage of the mix of skills and resources available in the local community. For instance, the Green Gym projects in Wakefield partnered with local regeneration groups which prioritise economic and social deprivation but appreciate that community gardening can offer a means of building social capital and individual skills. This allowed Green Gyms to connect with community as the Wakefield senior practitioner explains:

We’re a national organization we don’t have community workers in place. So we need to develop the buy-in, project managers need to develop the relationships and the partnerships with community groups and community support and representatives. (Green Gym Senior Practitioner (Wakefield), 2006)

 Similar partnerships existed in Bollington and at Holy Trinity. In Bollington, the group had links with a tree-planting organisation, the local baker which had a window display about their activities, and the local borough council. At Holy Trinity, the CEG organised a fair trade fashion show in collaboration with the local Oxfam shop and the fashion course at the further education college, using the clothes and design skills of the latter to put the show together. Groups could not always predict which organisations will work in partnership with them, and some have made no headway with organisations that at a national level are supportive of
environmental action (for instance Bollington tried to enlist the local Women’s Institute to no avail). In addition, this tendency to make links with other organisations to meet objectives related to a marked tendency to run activities that tie in with other agendas. This means that the community-based organisations’ definitions of sustainability were often very broad, incorporating multiple social objectives. Witness the Green Gym focus on community cohesion, skills building and personal health.

The importance of leadership on sustainability issues was apparent. This included leadership on sustainability stemming from the parent organisation and leadership from the practitioners in the group concerned. Women’s Institute, Green Gym and Holy Trinity participants emphasised the importance of leadership from the practitioners in their groups (see outline of each of these cases above). In their comments participants often expressed respect for practitioners’ personalities as leaders and their knowledge on sustainability. This issue is also raised in the literature where various suggestions are made as to the ideal leadership of a group (a salaried leader, a small group of committed individuals) (Environ, 1996; Alexander et al., 2007). In addition, many of the practitioners expressed respect for the leadership of their parent organisations (Meanwood School, Women’s Institute, Holy Trinity and Bollington). Women’s Institute members and practitioners, for instance, were proud of their organisation taking a stand on environmental issues:

The WI have quite a voice. They ... can make representations to parliament and they are heard. Feedback on this can get to the right places. We have resolutions at the annual meetings and a lot of follow up work is done from it. At the moment it is field-gate milk prices... I really think we can make a big impact. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2)

Holy Trinity practitioners were relieved that the Church of England had started to engage in environmental debates (see outline of the case above). Leadership at a parent organisation level seemed therefore to provide added impetus and respectability for local initiatives.

One of the more tangible resources that the community-based organisations provided was the opportunity for people to come together to tackle sustainability practices. As was shown in the outlines of the different cases above, the provision of activities was treated in very different ways by the different projects. One of the most noticeable differences was the level to which participants are required to engage. The Ecoteams project run by the Women’s Institute and Bollington groups required fairly intense participation in a small group in discussing and acting on sustainability practices. In the Green Gym and Meanwood School case studies, the activity was the reason that people attended – to work on conservation or to make sure children
get to school. Here, there was less, indeed at Meanwood School no requirement to engage with more general issues of sustainability. At Holy Trinity and in the rest of the Bollington case study activities, participants were required to be less committed, with the main body of the work taken on by practitioners and other organising members. This meant that some people who had partaken in activities were not comfortable in calling themselves ‘participants’, as they saw the organising committee as more central than themselves. There were also very different intensities of involvement within the different cases. One group in particular (Reddish Vale Green Gym) showed very intense emotional involvement (note this is the group that call each other ‘the family’). The others cases reported a variety of levels of involvement. For some, being involved in an activity on sustainability was just an extension of their involvement with the community-based organisation more generally (especially Meanwood School, Holy Trinity and Women’s Institute), whereas for others their involvement in the sustainability project was the only involvement in the community that they had (Bollington, most of Green Gym participants). It seems that the level of social interaction promoted within the group varies considerably, and later in the thesis it will become apparent how that affects participant sustainability practice outcomes. This was raised as an important context for encouraging change in the literature (Mosler, 1993; Staats et al., 2004).

In summary then, in each case organisational resources were mobilised for participating community members which helped them to engage in sustainability practices. These include leadership, partnership with other organisations, various forms of support from parent organisations, financial resources and the very act of bringing people together. This discussion of organisational capacity brings to mind the literature on social capital and more broadly the concept of community capacity which was introduced in the literature review. In particular it recalls the quote from Murray, from the general literature on community development, where he claims that building social capital requires, among other things, “sufficient opportunities for engagement by those with the necessary motivation and skills” (Murray, 2000, p.100-101). The organisational resources observed in this case offered the opportunity for motivated participants to engage. Indeed, it seems that the presence of these kinds of organisational resources was important to the existence of sustainability projects in community-based organisations.

**4.7.3 Infrastructural resources**

Infrastructural resources were inherently different according to which facilities were available within a particular community. Sometimes additional information, services or facilities could be provided by the community-based organisation relatively straightforwardly, sometimes they could not. Because of the nature of these organisations, which tend to have limited power
and resources, there were limits to what they could provide. Their reliance on volunteers is one of the hallmarks of limited power, an issue which is discussed in more detail in discussion of personal resources below (see 4.7.4). Indeed, many of the infrastructural resources that exist in communities are controlled by government or the private sector, rather than by the community sector itself. The issue of the effect of infrastructure on practice is raised in the literature on this kind of intervention (Maiteny, 2002), although no discussion of how community-based organisations can change infrastructures takes place. Table 4.3 shows a summary of the infrastructural resources that were created in the cases under study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Infrastructural resource effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>Walking bus (service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Fair trade goods on sale (facilities), Green Pages listings (information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gyms</td>
<td>Gardening spaces (facilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Ecoteams programme (information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington</td>
<td>Grant for insulation for townsfolk (facilities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The infrastructural resources that were offered to participants by these community-based organisations are varied, but in general rather limited. The Women’s Institute offers the Ecoteams programme to its participants: this constitutes an infrastructural resource in that it offers a structure through which participants are able to take on sustainability practices. The Holy Trinity group were able to make changes to the infrastructure of the church, including offering opportunities to the congregation to buy fair trade goods on stalls and in the canteen, and changing the lighting around the church and its buildings to low energy alternatives. In addition, the provision of the extensive ‘green pages’ listings changes participants’ access to infrastructural resources in the area, making them aware of the opportunities for sustainable consumption. These information resources allow participants to live more sustainably within the existing infrastructure. The Wakefield Green Gym offered new gardening spaces for participants to use as a resource for their activities. In Bollington, townsfolk have access to a new grant to fit insulation in their homes due to the work of the group. At Meanwood school the walking bus offers a new infrastructure for parents to have their child taken to school safely. None of these infrastructural changes are particularly substantial, and again, this relates to the relative lack of power and resources of the community-based organisations under study.

This is still an important category, however, not least because participants and practitioners commented on the relative difficulty of taking on sustainability practices as a result
of the nature of existing infrastructural resources. In some communities the infrastructure can be conducive to sustainability practices, and in the Meanwood School case, the physical layout of the approach to school meant that most participants commented on how difficult driving a child into school is. As one participant put it: “To be honest I would rather walk there than have the nightmare of having to try and find a car parking space. It’s just horrific down there in the morning.” (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 4). Elsewhere, such a conducive infrastructure for sustainability practices did not exist. In one iteration of the Women’s Institute cases (Worcestershire 1), members did not even consider changing their transport practices as this was considered too difficult given that most members live in rural areas. Given the rural setting, the limited availability of public transport and the limited services available within walking distance (especially shops), many members could not see a realistic alternative to car use. As one member puts it:

I’ve got a car but I would struggle without… You really need one when you are in the country. While you give people lifts and you do share when you go on outings… very often you have to use cars, it is just not viable to use anything else. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2)

In effect members feel that they are doing their best in the context of a limiting infrastructure.

It is notable then, that community-based organisations offered rather limited infrastructural resources to their participants. This probably connects to community-based organisations limited access to resources, and resulting limited power to change infrastructures. Indeed, most infrastructural resources are probably beyond the control of community-based organisations. Such infrastructural resources did have an important impact on participants’ sustainability practices, however, and, as such, are an enabling or constricting factor that needs to be taken into account in understanding the outcomes of the case studies. This discussion resonates with the literature on infrastructures of provision (Shove, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a; van Vliet et al., 2005).

4.7.4 Participant resources

Who the participants are has a substantial impact on what a community-based organisation can do to change their sustainability practices. Given that these organisations are predominantly staffed by volunteers, the nature and contribution of the participants cannot be closely controlled. Chapter 5 deals with participants in more detail. There are some more general points to be made here, however, that arose from the comparison of the participants in different cases, and from the voluntary nature of the participants’ involvement.
Table 4.4. Summary of resources and conflicts associated with participants in different cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Participant resources and conflicts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>Offering time to walk children to school&lt;br&gt;Difficulties in finding volunteers (stress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Group members use skills to arrange events and offer facilities&lt;br&gt;Difficulties in finding volunteers (stress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gyms</td>
<td>Offering time and gardening skills to allotment/country park&lt;br&gt;Difficulties in finding volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Dedicating time to changing practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington</td>
<td>Using professional skills to run the group (including raising money using grant-writing experience and managing volunteer resources)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cases in this study were chosen for variety, mainly along the dimension of how people become involved in a group. In addition, I attempted to include variety in other dimensions, including the nature of the communities addressed (see 3.3.3.6). As a result, in the communities under study, people had very different access to resources, in terms of time, money, and skills. There were considerable contrasts in both the socio-economic profiles and the cohesiveness of the different communities in which these five cases are based. The most striking contrast here was between the Green Gyms in Wakefield, and Bollington Carbon Revolution group (see also my discussion of this issue in 3.4.4). Wakefield Green Gym projects addressed highly deprived neighbourhoods, where residents have limited educational attainment and high unemployment (CACI, 2008). In addition, many of those interviewed, and indeed those involved in Green Gym projects, had learning difficulties, other disabilities or mental health problems. Bollington Carbon Revolution, on the other hand, was set in a relatively wealthy commuter town with a long tradition of community activism, high education levels and high income (ibid). Participants were mainly professionals with considerable experience in the environmental sector. The contrasts between these two projects were substantial, and their management structure (Wakefield activities were organised and funded by a national non-governmental organisation, Bollington Carbon Revolution was a bottom-up organisation which found its own funding) is highly symptomatic of the different communities. The literature suggests that the social cohesion and sense of identity which we see in Bollington is useful in trying to promote practice change (Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Luckin and Sharp, 2005). The Bollington group also has a big advantage in the richness of personal resources which volunteers bring to the table (in their education, wealth, and professional involvement in environment). It is fair to say that specific communities’ capacities for action are different because of their differing socio-economic profile.
and social cohesiveness. How exactly that difference manifests itself is less clear. It would be unfair, for instance, to conclude from this study that access to economic and educational (personal) resources is a prerequisite for people to participate in community activities addressing sustainability practice (as seems to be implied by Robbins and Rowe, 2002).

Indeed, a more convincing conclusion would be that participants will have resources to offer a community-based organisation as volunteers which will vary according to their personal background. This is supported by Sewell’s notion of ‘polysemy’ which he explains as follows:

Any array of resources is capable of being interpreted in varying ways and, therefore, of empowering different actors and teaching different schemas. (Sewell, 1992, p. 19)

Sewell uses the word ‘schemas’ in a similar sense to Giddens’ ‘rules’ here, and offers a rather non-judgemental outlook on personal resources. In the literature that deals with this kind of interventions a series of more generic skills come up that seem to be important among volunteers (including reflexivity, knowledge, enthusiasm, negotiation, motivation, curiosity) (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Robbins and Rowe, 2002). The case studies that I researched accessed funding using a range of skills and using the different networks available to their members. The Holy Trinity group, for instance, baked cakes to raise money. In contrast the Bollington Carbon Revolution used their considerable professional experience in grant writing to access more diverse (and more substantial) funds. The Green Gym projects were deliberately funded by government in deprived areas to try to increase capacity for community action. The organisations here therefore use their rather different participants’ resources for fund raising in very different ways. Such organisations may also need support in cases where the skills for fund raising are not available among participants in the community. Inevitably, well connected and well resourced participants are more likely to come from wealthy, well-networked communities. One lesson of importance from the Green Gym at Reddish Vale, however, is that it is not always evident which resources participants’ hold. Here, in quote that I also used above, one of the participants pointed out that capacity to act among members can be deceptive:

...if you’ve got a group, they might seem very capable, but you’ve got to know who the vulnerable members are don’t you... because you only actually know what people have allowed you to know. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

The main way in which these organisations rely on their participants is as a volunteering resource. Some of the cases in this study noted difficulties in finding volunteers to help run projects and events (Meanwood School, Green Gym, Holy Trinity). For both Meanwood School and Holy Trinity this meant difficulties in finding help to implement the projects initiated by the
groups. Once the idea for the project was established, finding people who could be responsible for the activity related to it proved difficult. In the Green Gym in Wakefield, members sometimes did not have the capacity to carry out activities. In contrast, the Green Gym group in Reddish Vale, had trouble finding someone who was prepared to coordinate the activity. While plenty of group members were willing to attend conservation activities, none was prepared to take on the responsibility of running these activities. This ties in with a general concern with volunteer reliability, which is a feature of the literature in this area, as the unpaid nature of the work that volunteers do leaves little room for either carrots or sticks (Pearce, 1993). In the Green Gym case this extends further to volunteers questioning if it is appropriate for them, as volunteers, to be involved in organising activities at all. Again this concern is noted in the literature (MacNeela, 2008). Bollington practitioners, on the other hand, seemed to have accepted the transient nature of voluntary help:

You can’t spread yourselves so thin that someone drops out or something drops dead then things just fall over … you’ve got to have a little bit of leeway there because you don’t have a whole organisation to pull on (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

As well as accepting that things might go wrong, the group tries to manage the risk inherent in voluntary activities by planning for uncertainty in their activities. This marked a rather sophisticated approach to volunteers at Bollington which was not seen elsewhere.

Connected to these staffing issues were issues of stress, in particular experienced by those in organisational roles who were concerned that they might be unable to fulfil the promises of action that they had made. This was particularly notable at Holy Trinity and Meanwood School, and is a common feature of volunteering activity more generally (MacNeela, 2008). The effects of stress for practitioners in these two cases were to limit the scope of future plans. At Meanwood School, for instance, the prospect of setting up a second walking bus was dismissed due to the difficulty in recruiting volunteers for the first bus. As the practitioner put it:

Parents have also asked for a second walking bus but at the moment, I’m just not going with that, because nobody else wants to organize it, and it’s so difficult to get one staffed that I’m really reluctant to take on a second route. (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005)

Stress was also experienced at the Reddish Vale Green Gym related to the change in the group’s status following independence from the BTCV (as explained in the case study above). Members saw an imminent end to enjoyable activities which they did not feel empowered to prevent.
Interestingly, the Women’s Institute did not experience stress with relation to the voluntary activities that they undertook. This is likely to be related to the scope of their activities which fitted comfortably within their existing commitments and approach, and did not require a great deal of additional organising or administration, in comparison to some of the other cases. At Bollington, practitioners seemed to be very much aware of how much time they had to commit to activities, and they are very careful to avoid over working their members. As one of the practitioners puts it: “all you need to do is give someone too much and you know you’ve sort of lost [them]...” (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008). Because of this management of risk, members do not experience much stress through being involved in the group.

Volunteers are people with time to spare, and, as such, are often not in full time employment. Reasons for being in part-time work or unemployment are numerous, but during the research I encountered many participants who had negative reasons for having spare time (for instance unemployment, mental or physical health problems, and learning difficulties). Volunteering can be a positive thing for people with time on their hands, and that can also bring benefits to the group more generally. For instance, one educated participant who works part time in an unskilled job due to mental health problems, was able to use his professional background in the Holy Trinity project, where he helped to organise and run projects (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1). Such double benefits (for both individual and group) are not always apparent. So, for instance, the Green Gym’s work with people with learning difficulties in Wakefield showed considerable benefits for the individuals involved, many of whom had only this activity to look forward to every week (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). These participants were not able to run the group alone, and, as such, the long term sustainability of the group was in question. The broader benefits to society of these Green Gym projects were substantial, but these are not always taken into account in project evaluation, and, as a result, projects can fail to achieve their stated objectives, even when a valuable service is being delivered. The Green Gym example is testament to the rather unpredictable nature of voluntary projects, which can happen to attract a particular type of volunteer and then have different outcomes as a result.

In summary, different communities result in different types of participant being available to engage in sustainability practice projects. Participants draw on the connections and resources available to them, which may be more or less limited. The voluntary nature of the activities run by these groups is significant, as the cases under study had some difficulty in finding suitable volunteers to implement activities. These difficulties led to uncertainty about the sustainability of the groups in the long term, and stress among practitioners and active members.
of the cases in connection with this uncertainty. Most cases do not make plans to deal with this uncertainty and stress, with Bollington being an exception here.

4.7.5 Commentary on the nature and importance of community context

In summary then, various contextual factors identified at the beginning of this analysis (4.7) impact on the capacity for projects run by community-based organisations to change participants’ sustainability practices. I have categorised these as cultural rules, and organisational, infrastructural and personal resources. In the five cases under study, community-based organisations attempt to change the rules and increase available resources in order to change their participants’ sustainability practices. This includes community-based organisations trying to embed sustainability projects into existing culture, and to create positive associations with sustainability practice change. There is great variety in how this is done, and it is not always straightforward, with problems coming about because different members of the community hold different understandings of sustainability and its relation to their community. Organisational resources are offered by the community-based organisation itself, as well as by connected and parent organisations. Organisational resources include leadership, the act of getting people together, partnerships between organisations, the legitimacy offered by organisations and financial and organisational resources. Community-based organisations make a rather limited contribution to participants’ infrastructural resources, probably related to this sector’s lack of power and capacity to instigate change. The nature of members (personal resources) also impacts on capacity of the group. In particular, they are volunteers, and this means that they are able to provide time and skills to the community-based organisations’ activities. The personal resources that individuals can offer will differ according to the particular nature of the members of the community. To some extent this relates to the socio-economic profile of the community discussed in 3.4.4, although the community-based organisations under study seemed to find their own way of functioning according to the resources their volunteers bring.

It is also useful here to draw out any similarities and differences between cases in terms of the rules and resources that they change for participants. The most striking thing here were the similarities: with all the organisations making similar changes in terms of organisational resources, and only minor changes of infrastructural resources. Equally, the community-based organisations under study used participant resources in a similar way: although these were different group by group, the organisations seemed to mobilise the skills of their specific volunteers. The only notable differences here are that Meanwood School does not address
cultural rules and that Bollington has managed to evolve control mechanisms in relation to difficulties in finding and managing volunteers. The lack of engagement with general sustainability issues at Meanwood School had a knock-on effect on how much practice change participants report in Chapter 6. Bollington’s management of its volunteer resources made the project seem more sustainable in the long run, as stress issues do not play such a big part. Certainly some of the other organisations where stress regarding volunteer recruitment was experienced have since either been discontinued (Holy Trinity) or downscaled (Reddish Vale Green Gym).

4.8 Conclusions

Five cases of community action for sustainability were detailed in this chapter, with explanations of the context of each case, the activities undertaken and the distinguishing features of the case. The cases represent a wide range of community action for sustainability, as determined by the purposive sample for diversity. Groups take very different organisational forms, with some employing staff to organise activities, some using local volunteers to implement national programmes, and others led entirely from the grassroots. Despite this, there are some common features between cases which were brought out in the analysis. Using practice theory as a guide, the elements of social context which affect this case were drawn out. I identified cultural rules and organisational, infrastructural and participant resources as playing a part in determining the capacity of each group to act to influence member practice. This chapter therefore made the first contribution to the development of theory around the topic of the thesis.

In the next chapter I will outline the context of the participants’ involved in these projects in more detail, with reference to sustainability practices, and their community-orientation.
5 Participant Context

5.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 3, this thesis is an evaluation of the effects of community-based projects on individual sustainability. Evaluation research aims to assess the changes that a particular project or programme brings about in a participant’s practices. As such, in the context of community-based organisations’ interventions for sustainability practice, it is important to understand the participant’s sustainability practices before they joined the project in question. In addition, given the link that is being made in this thesis between sustainability practice and the practice of involvement in community, the nature of each participant’s involvement in community is also important to unravel. This chapter deals with these two issues and, in doing so, answers research question 2 which is worded: ‘Who participates in community-based initiatives on sustainability?’. It also sets the scene for Chapter 6, which deals with the outcomes of these kinds of projects for the participants involved, both in terms of their sustainability practices, and with relation to other outcomes that they report.

The first part of the chapter documents the sustainability practices of participants in the case studies in question. I have used the technique of ‘ideal types’ here to categorise the participants in the case according to their history of sustainability practice. I start this section by briefly looking at other categorisations in the literature and drawing some generic issues in categorisation from existing work. I then go on to explain my own categorisation in detail, and to analyse this by comparing categories across case studies and in relation to the literature. The main finding here is that these projects are attracting a range of types of participant, including those that report a history of sustainability practices and those that report no previous interests.

The second part of the chapter addresses the participants’ practices of volunteering. Here, I compare my sample to the broader volunteering population using common measures of community-orientation. I also look at the involvement of the participant in the group in question and in the community more broadly. Some of the cases under study here attracted non-traditional volunteers, and others turned the focus of their current volunteers towards sustainability practices. I develop a typology of participant involvement in community here. In the final commentary I conclude that there does not seem to be a connection between level of engagement in community and sustainability practices at the outset of these projects. In other words, people are not substantially more likely to report sustainability practices when they are more active volunteers.
Before I go on to deal with these two issues I need to clarify some of the terminology that will be used in this chapter and in the rest of the thesis. The term ‘sustainability practice’ was defined in the introduction to the thesis (see 1.4.1). A series of other terms are used here to help explain participants’ thoughts and feelings with relation to sustainability as these were seen to have an impact on the practices themselves. This includes the following key term:

Discursive consciousness taken from Giddens, this term means the parts of practice that participants are able to talk and think about (Giddens, 1984)

I have dissected this key term further to incorporate distinctions between elements of discursive consciousness, in particular those that refer to opinions, values or beliefs, and those that refer to understanding or knowledge. The following terms are therefore used:

Attitudes participants’ opinions on sustainability or sustainability practice
Awareness participants’ understanding of sustainability or sustainability practice
Know-how participants’ understanding of how to perform sustainability practices

These terms will be used in the rest of the thesis, including in the theoretical models presented in Chapter 8.

5.2 The participant and sustainability practice

5.2.1 Introduction

In order to evaluate change in sustainability practice, a good understanding of the participant’s practice at the beginning of the project is essential to allow a realistic estimation of the effects that the project has had on the participant at the point at which they were interviewed. In this research project it would have been difficult to create a research design which allowed a formal ‘before’ measurement, given the nature of these projects: there is very little public profile to community groups of this sort until they have had some success. As such, measurement of people’s previous sustainability practice was solicited in the qualitative interviews with participants, which occurred after each participant had had some involvement with the case in question. In effect, members were asked to reflect retrospectively on the process of involvement in each case, starting with reflection on their practices before becoming involved with the project in question. In order to present data on the group of participants that were interviewed, I sorted them into categories according to their history of sustainability practice. These categories emerged from the way the participants concerned accounted for their past practice and their
route to involvement with the group. They also connect to more general theoretical work on categories of sustainable consumers and lifestyles in the literature.

This section proceeds as follows: first I briefly present previous categorisations of individual sustainability in the literature in order to raise some of the issues with such categorisations, and set out my position. Second I present a categorisation of participants’ sustainability practice history with a detailed explanation of each category, evidenced by data from the qualitative interviews. Finally, I present an analysis of the data, exploring variations between cases and commenting more generally on the categorisation.

5.2.2 Categorisation in the literature

The categorisation of individuals that attempt to take on sustainability practices, has had some attention in the literature. This relates to the established qualitative social science tradition of analysing data by creating ‘ideal types’, discussed in the methods section (see 3.4.3.2). In addition, a newer marketing tradition of ‘segmentation’ of customer types has had an impact on literature and policy in this area. In work on ‘social marketing’ the aim is to find segments of the population that want to act in particular ways (McKenzie-Mohr, 2000). Note that Warde also sees segmentation as a useful strategy in the context of practice theory, as he contends that: "Empirical evidence indicates differences between groups of people with regard to their understandings of a practice, the procedures they adopt and the values to which they aspire." (Warde, 2005, p. 139). The lack of segmentation or categorisation in previous policy work on sustainable consumption is seen broadly as problematic, with Hobson, for instance, noting the impact that a simple message like ‘are you doing your bit?’ can have on different types of people (Hobson, 2001). This literature is worth examining before I continue with the presentation of my categorisation, to give some context to how my work fits with previous work, and to raise some of the issues that exist.

A useful starting point here is McDonald et al’s review of previous categorisations of voluntary simplifiers (McDonald et al., 2006). This includes some analysis of similar terms such as ‘green consumer’. There is evidence in the literature reviewed by McDonald et al, of writers identifying different degrees of voluntary simplicity, attempting to distinguish between those that have fully embraced the ethos of voluntary simplicity and those who have only partially embraced it. McDonald et al’s proposed categorisation of voluntary simplifiers thus includes ‘not voluntary simplifiers’, ‘beginner voluntary simplifiers’ and ‘voluntary simplifiers’ (McDonald et al., 2006). The authors suggest that this categorisation should be developed further through empirical work, with some suggestions as to a breakdown of ‘beginner voluntary simplifiers’ into ‘apprentice simplifiers’ (simplifiers in the making), ‘partial simplifiers’ (those
who will never take on full simplification) and ‘accidental simplifiers’ (those who live simply for other reasons). This amounts to a categorisation of participants by both values and behaviour, as the distinction between voluntary simplifiers and beginner voluntary simplifiers is in the extent to which they have embraced the ethos and actions associated with the lifestyle.

Work by McDonald et al is only one of many attempts at categorising individuals according to their practices. A few other categorisations are of particular interest here. First, is a recommendation on categorisation emerging from writing on practice theory in relation to consumption. Warde suggests a broader range of potential categories, based on individuals’ capacity to act:

> Considering agents’ capacities we might differentiate between long-standing participants and novitiates, theorists and technicians, generalists and specialists, conservatives and radicals, visionaries and followers, the highly knowledgeable and the relatively ignorant, and the professional and the amateur. (Warde, 2005, p. 138)

Here, Warde insinuates that a wide range of personal characteristics might influence participants’ capacity to act, presumably different contexts will affect which of these is of relevance. Other categorisations of individuals sometimes attempt to understand the underlying values that influence behaviour. This includes Seyfang’s categorisation of values held by individuals using an analytical framework based on Douglas’s Cultural Theory (Seyfang, 2007). Seyfang categorises values of organic food shoppers according to three paradigms: hierachist, egalitarian, and individualist, and then analyses the impact of such values on acts of sustainable consumption. There are links here to work by Craig-Lees and Hill on voluntary simplifiers where individuals are categorised according to the nature of their underlying motives whether environmental, spiritual and self-oriented (Craig-Lees and Hill, 2002). Both of these categorisations start with evidence of sustainable behaviour and then analyse the values that affect this. It is also interesting that the idea of categorising consumers has also been taken up in the policy world. Defra’s recent ‘Framework for Pro-environmental Behaviours’, for instance, uses a social marketing methodology to categorise people by their attitudes to environmental issues, previous behaviours, demographic and capacity to act, identifying segments such as ‘waste watchers’ and ‘positive greens’ and estimating their likelihood to take action (Defra, 2008c). Defra’s recent work therefore uses both values and behaviour to categorise individuals, as well as demographic information such as socioeconomic grouping, education and wealth.

There are some issues with categorisation of consumers by values or attitudes alone due to the unpredictable nature of links between attitudes or values and behaviour known as the attitude-behaviour gap, discussed in the literature review. As such, I think it is important to
distinguish between individuals both according to their attitudes and their behaviour, or in practice terms their discursive consciousness and practices. This is especially important because the same behaviour might be undertaken for very different reasons in two cases (McDonald et al., 2006). McDonald et al, think that any attempts to encourage behaviour needs to take into account the motivations that stimulated the behaviour in the first place. As such, it could be that different categories emerge to explain individuals with similar behaviour but different motivations.

In summary then, there are a large number of ways in which a participants’ practice could be categorised. An important distinction here is between categorisations that rely principally on attitudes or values and those that take into account both attitudes and practice or behaviour. Since there is such a range of potential means of categorisation, it is clear that there is no single accepted categorisation within the literature. As such, the categorisation I developed in this research project started with the data, and drew on elements of the existing categorisations in the literature. Further comment on the relationship between this literature and my categorisation is included in the analysis section below (5.2.4).

5.2.3 Categorisation

The categorisation of participants below emerged from examining the data on each individual participant and looking for patterns across participants with regards their accounts of previous sustainability practice. This means that participants are categorised according to how they retrospectively present their own sustainability practices at the start of the project they joined. The data is taken from the responses to the question ‘Were you interested in environmental or ethical issues before you joined the project?’ that was asked in participant interviews, with further prompting on practice, attitudes and awareness according to how the respondent answered. As a result, various aspects of the participants’ discursive consciousness also contribute to the categorisation with regards previous sustainability practices, since participants answered this question in terms of practices, attitudes to sustainability and awareness of sustainability and sustainability practices. In theoretical terms the discursive consciousness has an important impact on practice, and, as such, it made sense to include these elements in the categorisation. In addition, people often characterised their entry to the project in reference to attitudes, awareness and/or practice.

Note that in line with the explanation of sustainability practices given in the introduction to the thesis, I am allowing participants to define their own sustainability practices here. This means that I am not imposing my own view of what ‘counts’ as sustainability practices to the respondents’ answers. Neither am I uncovering, at this stage, exactly how these sustainability
practices relate to other practices in everyday life (e.g. disposing of waste, shopping for food, using energy in the home). Such explicit connections between the participants’ conception of sustainability practice and everyday practices are made in the next chapter on outcomes where the details of what changed for participants are explained both in terms of sustainability practices and everyday practices. This does mean that the categorisation is based on the participants’ account of their history of sustainability practice. Some issues with this are explained in the analysis section below (5.2.4). In effect this amounts to a qualitative ‘before’ measurement of sustainability practice, with Chapter 6 covering the ‘after’ measurement (Outcomes).

**Table 5.1** Typology of participants in community-based organisations working on sustainability projects by history of sustainability practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant type</th>
<th>Participant description</th>
<th>Interviewee fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historically engaged in sustainability practices</td>
<td>Those reporting a considerable history of engagement in sustainability practices.</td>
<td>HT1, HT5, HT8, HT10, GG7, GG18, WI8, BC1, BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently engaged in sustainability practices</td>
<td>Those reporting a more recent history of engagement in sustainability practices.</td>
<td>HT2, HT7, BC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in ethos with complementary practices</td>
<td>Those reporting an ethos which connects to sustainability, and which impacts on their sustainability practices.</td>
<td>HT6, GG1, GG11, GG12, GG15, WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding sustainability values</td>
<td>Those reporting limited previous sustainability practice, but some previous pro-sustainability attitudes, and awareness of sustainability issues.</td>
<td>HT4, BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unengaged in sustainability practices</td>
<td>Those reporting no history of engagement in sustainability practices, or ethos with complementary practices.</td>
<td>MS1, MS2, MS3, MS4, HT3, HT9, GG2, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG8, GG9, GG13, GG14, GG16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unengaged and suspicious of ideas of sustainability</td>
<td>Those reporting suspicion of sustainability issues, and/or the idea of changing their practices.</td>
<td>GG5, GG17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categorisation in Table 5.1 reflects the range of types of individual that were encountered in the projects researched. It avoids categorising only on the basis of attitudes/values or behaviour/practice, given the problems associated with such approaches identified in the literature above. Table 5.1 summarises the different types of participant that have been identified within this study, as well as the way that specific interviewees fit into the typology. Note that only 42 respondents are listed in the table, out of the 45 interviewees. This is because some respondents in the Green Gym case in Wakefield were difficult to categorise due to satisfactory communication not taking place. This is explained further in the methods section.
(3.4.2). Note that categories are mutually exclusive because interviewees cannot be classed as both having a history of sustainability practice and unengaged for instance.

The categorisation emerged inductively through the analysis process. I realised that history of sustainability practice was important to understanding practice change fairly early on, given that evaluation research seeks to explain change, this was a logical area to explore. This could have merely resulted in previously engaged and ‘unengaged’ categories, the second of which indeed persists in the final categorisation. The sustainability values type was a theoretical category that was introduced at the beginning of the analysis as it represents people who sit in the ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ discussed in the literature review. After the Holy Trinity case I included a distinction between those that have been engaged in sustainability practices for some time (historically engaged) and those that were more recently attracted to sustainability issues (recently engaged), when I noticed differences in reported attitudes between these two types. The complementary ethos type emerged during the Women’s Institute case study, as participants had a strong ethos which did not stem from their understanding of sustainability but from an ethos which I call ‘waste-not’ here (explained in detail below). For complementary ethos types this ‘waste-not’ ethos was the motivation for ‘sustainability’ practices: practices that reduce impact on the environment even if they were not intended to do so. Finally the unengaged and suspicious category emerged during the Green Gym case study, where many of the respondents had joined the project for non-sustainability reasons, and, as such, some of these reported active hostility towards sustainability issues before they joined.

Participants are referred to in two ways in the following material. In Table 5.1 for instance, participants are referred by their interview reference only, with the first two letters signifying the case (MS is Meanwood School; HT is Holy Trinity; GG is Green Gym; WI is Women’s Institute and BC is Bollington Carbon Revolution) and the number signifying the interviewee number. In the text interviewees are referred to in full references, which include the case name, the date of the interview and the interviewee number, for instance (Meanwood School Respondent, 2005, 1). In the following sections I outline the different participant types in turn using evidence from my qualitative interview data.

5.2.3.1 Historically Engaged

Participants reporting a long history of engagement in sustainability practices could have been expected to dominate this kind of project. In fact they represent less than a quarter of those interviewed (9/42 see Table 5.1). Interviewees in this category presented their involvement in the project in relation to a long standing interest in sustainability which they connected with the broader narrative of their lives. The way that an interest in sustainability was connected to life
experiences by participants was varied. Some examples of the accounts that historically engaged people gave for their involvement in both the project in question and sustainability practices more generally follow:

We’ve made numerous changes over the years in terms of doing some practical things like green electricity tariffs. We’ve always been active recyclers, even before local councils did it, and composted. We made a decision not to fly quite a few years ago and we only run one car and things like that…we’ve always been, as a family we’ve been fairly conscious of the decisions we were making… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

Well I’ve been vegetarian for the last 30 years, and I’m very conscious of political issues connected with food. The first experience I had on an organic farm was… 1966! So I have a long association with that sort of area. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 7)

When I was teaching, I did used to, as far as I could without going overboard, try to get the children to be aware of the unfairness of the world, and how some children struggle to have one meal a day, let alone three. How the drought and war and everything… without going on but so that they were aware that their cosy little secure existence was quite a privilege for them (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10)

I just always felt that the natural world is important. I wanted to treat it respectfully. I read a book that was probably seminal for me called ‘touch the earth’ which is about the American Indians’ way of life. That was very highly based on respect for the provider of everything, overtly the provider of everything, whereas we can forget that things that we buy all packaged up actually started life in the soil…(Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8)

Some recurring themes occurred within the participants in this category’s explanations of how they have come to integrate sustainability practices into their lives. In the first quote here for instance the participant talked of being an active recycler ‘before local councils did it’ and the emphasis on having engaged in sustainability practices before it was conventional to do so is seen throughout this category (see also the second quote above). Lack of conventionality is another recurring theme here. Participants of this type were aware that some of their actions are not considered normal. For instance, another respondent gave a further example: “people laugh when they come into our house because we recycle tea bags” (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 5). The third quote here brings out a further theme which is that some people of this type associated sustainability practices with their lives more broadly, and talked of how their work has influenced their practices or how they have used their work to influence others (see for instance Green Gym Participants, 2007, 7, 18; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4). At Holy Trinity the emphasis on morality of sustainability practice was stronger than in the other cases, as seen in the final quote above. Such morality did not
necessarily link back to the Christian faith, indeed another respondent categorised this as ‘political’, as does the second quote here (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1).

Those with long histories of action had been engaged in practices for years (HT1 had been vegetarian since the 1970s and HT8 had used a local organic vegetable box service for 12 years). While participants were not required to explain their previous practices in detail, a wide range of practices were mentioned at interview including boycotting products (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1), using (and promoting) energy efficient lightbulbs (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 5), charity shopping (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10), cycling to work (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18) and giving up flying on family holidays (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1). Respondents connected these actions explicitly with their environmentalist values. For instance, one respondent said he had become vegetarian because: “I just, didn’t like the idea that something had to die in order for me not to” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1).

The historically engaged participants were more likely to voice opinions on the complex nature of environmental problems and on the difficulties of changing practices than other respondent types. Some examples of this follow:

I am more concerned for fair trade than organic. In some ways in that I think organic is a luxury for us, whereas fair trade I think is a moral imperative. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8)

I’d be more concerned now about whether the tuna was dolphin friendly, than whether it had been produced by some sort of fascist dictatorship. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

They’ve talked about introducing a power generation scheme by hydropower in Bollington. It’s totally uneconomic. It would be simply a gesture of something green as a tourist attraction … (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4)

Participants talked of the relative importance of sustainability issues to them as seen in the first quote, and sometimes took great pains to decide which ethical or environmental option to choose. In the second quote, the participant talked of a development of this hierarchy of values over his lifetime. In addition, there was concern with the technicalities of sustainability practices shown in the third quote. Here also the respondent was unconvinced by his group’s approach on a specific sustainability issue. Such a concern with the complexities of sustainability and taking on sustainability practices was particularly apparent in the Holy Trinity historically engaged type.

In summary then, this category includes participants with a long history of sustainability practice, and corresponding pro-sustainability attitudes. Likely because of the length of their
involvement in these issues, historically engaged participants also notice the trade-offs they have to make with regards sustainability in their daily choices.

5.2.3.2 Recently Engaged

Three interviewees fall into this category, two from Holy Trinity and one from Bollington (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2 and 7; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2). The interviewees reporting a recent history of sustainability practices presented their interest in these issues as relatively recent but predating their involvement in the project in question. Recently engaged members talked of change in practices in the last few years, in reaction to either changes in their lives or changes in service provision. Some examples follow:

we only really did it when we moved to our current place because we were renting before and we didn’t really have the room for recycling boxes and so it’s really only in the last two years …Yeah actually having the facilities and the collections…  (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

the two bin system started when we got the blue plastic bag which was the council’s first doorstep collection. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)

Participants in this category seem to have reacted to changes in their environment or in infrastructural provision in recent years, and to the changing profile of environmental issues in their daily lives. The main difference between this type and the historically engaged was the relatively recent nature of their sustainability practices. The extent of the existing sustainability practices that this type mentioned at interview was not very different to that of the historically engaged, for instance members listed composting, extensive recycling, local and fair-trade shopping, reducing energy use, and ethical investments (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2 and 7; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2).

Members of this type in both cases seemed comfortable with thinking about environment and ethics in relation to their own practice, they showed an understanding of how changes to their own practice might reduce impacts on environment (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2 and 7; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2). They were less likely to dwell on the complexities of sustainability problems than the ‘historically engaged’ type. Instead this type identifies the problem and where they stand on it, and does not discuss the complexities of why they believe what they do, and how things are prioritised. Some examples of this follow:

I think that maybe things are changing, in that this question of cheap flights, is not really a sustainable one. I think that if cheap flights are possible because we are not paying enough for the fuel, then I think it’s bad and it’s not going to be
sustainable is it? People tearing off on flights everywhere. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 7)

But what you do in this country has a knock on effect now worldwide. I think you’ve got to accept some responsibility for poverty in other parts of the world (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)

Perhaps as a result of this rather uncontroversial understanding of the issues, members of this type had a rather positive approach to sustainability practice change, for instance one member showed great enthusiasm for her recycling system:

Oh. I’m obsessive about recycling. Obsessive. In each room in our house you have two rubbish bins. One for paper. One for other things like dirty tissues that can’t be recycled. In the garage we have a crate for bottles... So all the plastic bottles are put in a crate, that’s shampoo bottles, washing up liquid bottles, all in a crate .... Fortunately where we live we have one of the blue wheely bins so paper, card, tins and glass are recycled. It’s just now part of our family setup. Two bins in each room, so the boys even in their bedrooms will sort out sweet wrappers from bits of work that they don’t want any more and then just put them in two different bins. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)

As well as enthusiasm, this detailed explanation shows a desire to show me, the interviewer, that she is doing it right, and that despite the system’s complexity that it is something that has become straightforward: see ‘it’s just now part of our family setup’. The member from Bollington in this type attributed her family’s desire to improve their current practices as being a motivating factor for joining an Ecoteam:

We both see ourselves as being quite ‘eco’ but yet we have the feeling that there is so much more that we could do and doing this programme helps us with that… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

This is again a rather positive view on sustainability practice change.

In summary, this type includes participants who recently became engaged in sustainability practice, but did so before their membership of the community-based organisation in question. They have a tendency to understand sustainability issues more simply than those that are historically engaged.

5.2.3.3 Complementary Ethos

The complementary ethos type was seen in three of the cases under study: Holy Trinity, the Green Gym and the Women’s Institute. Participants in this type framed their interest in sustainability issues around the activities of the group they belonged to (conservation or gardening in the Green Gym) or around a long-standing ethos that connected with sustainability, which again connects to the group to which they belonged (Women’s Institute, Holy Trinity). In
this section a more detailed description of members with a complementary ethos from the each of the three cases follows. Broadly speaking these participants have taken on some sustainability practices before they joined the community-based organisation, but for different reasons to the two types described above (historically engaged and recently engaged). In practice theory terms, complementary ethos types made different discursive consciousness connections to the historically and recently engaged types which then stimulated ‘sustainability’ practices. These connections stemmed from a ‘complementary’ ethos, rather than an ethos of sustainability, but still resulted in practices less harmful to the environment and to others.

At the Green Gym the complementary ethos was connected to enthusiasm for gardening and food production. The respondents in this category had no history of interest in sustainability issues, but their enthusiasm for gardening and food production seemed to have an impact on their practices relating to sustainability (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1, 11, 12, 15). The interviewees in this category had a substantial history of gardening or food cultivation varying from many years of growing her own (GG15) to an identified interest in gardening since childhood (GG1). Since much of Wakefield borders rural areas a few of the interviewees there had contact with farming or other plant rearing businesses (GG1 helped out in the local plant nursery, GG11 and GG12 were from farming families). This experience with food production seems to have led to a suspicion of new farming practices and in some cases an antagonism towards non-organic methods:

I’m going to sound like one of these old grumpy people, years ago people didn’t buy imported things. You had what was in season. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15)

We don’t believe in chemicals. Only natural ones like manure. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 11)

We’ve stopped spraying it because it just comes back stronger anyway, so we don’t spray. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 12)

While an interest in gardening or food production is not directly linked to sustainability sympathies or practices, it does represent a link with nature which for these participants results in sustainability practices. Several participants indeed mentioned avoidance of pesticides and fertilisers in their gardening at home (see Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1, 11, 12, 15, and evidence in the quotations above). One also encouraged wildlife in her garden before joining the gym (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15).

The ‘complementary ethos’ experienced in the Women’s Institute projects was noted by all Women’s Institute participants, who held (and expressed) a strong ethos (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1-8). This ethos involved making do with what you have or can make, and
avoiding waste (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1-4 and 6). In addition, it drove members to want to ‘do the right thing’ (Women's Institute Practitioner 1, 2006; Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3 and 5). The ethos seemed to make members particularly susceptible to acting pro-environmentally in their use of resources and waste production. To give some examples, here are some accounts of Women’s Institute members’ in response to being asked about their prior interest in sustainability practices:

That’s right, if we have food left over we give it to the dogs, we don’t throw anything out. You feel very guilty actually if you throw anything out. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3)

I think it has always worried me how in the last 20-30 years we seem to have this throwaway thing. Things are not built to last. There is so much waste. Even with food there is a lot of waste. We are growing stuff and it is perfectly good but they don’t want it because it is the wrong shape, wrong size, wrong colour. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 6)

It maybe sounds silly these days but it is something that I’ve always practiced. I was brought up to practice it. We lived in the country, you recycled... probably the age we are as well... everything was recycled when we were young. So it just seems natural and right to do it and not waste. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2)

The need for frugality (see in the first quote here) was a recurrent theme and connected with participants experiences of times of need in childhood (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3, 4 and 5), and members associate reducing waste and use with their or their mothers’ experience of the second world war (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1 and 2). Beyond frugality, there was a sense that wasting in itself is wrong, which can lead to sustainability practices being taken on instinctively (quote three above). Women’s Institute members attribute their ethos to their upbringing in a time when resources were scarce, and in a rural context (second and third quote here – the second speaker is a farmer). Other members also attributed their understanding of environment to their rural nature, claiming a deeper understanding of seasonality and the origin of food than city dwellers (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1 and 4). While this is an era that they would not want to return to (one interviewee mentioned not wanting to return to her first 15 years using a composting toilet) (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 4), there was a sense of pride in not wasting resources, and guilt when things are wasted (seen in the first quote here). Members did not always associate this ethos with sustainability practice, although some did explicitly recognise the link after the project (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2 and 4). In addition, this was perceived to be an ethos which was not held by people outside the Women’s Institute. One participant, for instance, said her family laughs at her
frugal behaviour (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2). There are some parallels here with reactions to people engaged with sustainability practices.

For Women’s Institute participants, many sustainability practices were affected by this ethos and some of the practices that members reported being engaged in before the Ecoteams process are as follows: growing her own vegetables, recycling; taking a shower rather than a bath; composting, switching appliances off standby, gardening for nature, using waterbutts, making and distributing reusable bags. Members varied between those who already did many of these things (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1, 2 and 4) and those that only engaged in a few sustainability practices before the project (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3, 5 and 6). Some practices were outside of members’ comfort zones, particularly those that involve a substantial change of lifestyle (e.g. composting toilets for WI4, and growing all your own vegetables for WI3) or compromising norms of hygiene (e.g. not flushing the toilet for WI5). Members did not frame their actions as environmentalist, in fact some respondents make clear that they did not see themselves as ‘green’ (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1 and 3). As one respondent puts it: “now it’s called environment, then it was about not wasting.” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2) Members often had an area of interest that links them into the topic (e.g. Recycling for WI1, Animal welfare for WI3 and WI6), but did not buy into a full set of pro-environmental beliefs. Witness one members’ scepticism on global warming: “I’m quite interested in recycling and environment but I wasn’t convinced about global warming. I was quite sceptical about it” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1).

The one member at Holy Trinity that is included in this type is from the same age group as the Women’s Institute members, and had a similar ethos, which she called ‘conservation’ (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6). This participant had made the link between the environment movement and her own practices that has come about through this instinct to avoid waste, and was happy to call herself a ‘conservationist’. This may be because she is surrounded by ‘historically engaged’ participants at Holy Trinity who would also refer to themselves as such. She characterised ‘conservationism’ as endemic to her way of thinking and living, as she explained: “I even sometimes pick up elastic bands. It’s just built in me” (ibid.). She has a history of acting to avoid waste, partly due to past circumstances enforcing such frugality:

I lived in this village where we shared water between nine of us and I really, really took that seriously. My children were nagged to death about leaving taps running and when it was a hot summer, I taught them, whenever they brushed their teeth they had to switch the tap off… I can’t believe that other mothers aren’t teaching their children or grandchildren this. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6)
Comparisons that this respondent makes between her own practices and that of others often spilled over into annoyance with the practices of friends, acquaintances and family (as evidenced in the quote above). Such frustration emphasised the marginality of participants from the ‘complementary ethos’ category within society: while these participants offer a rich vein of potentially sustainable practices they also do so within a wider society where that practice is not necessarily accepted as normal.

In summary, complementary ethos types are following sustainability practices when they join the sustainability activity in question, but not for environmentalist reasons. Instead they are influenced by another ethos in their lives (gardening, ‘waste not’ or ‘conservation’).

5.2.3.4 Sustainability Values

Only two interviewees from my sample fit into this type (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 4; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3). The participants concerned both professed an awareness of ‘environmental issues’, and a pro-sustainability attitude before joining the group, but limited sustainability practices. The Holy Trinity participant related his awareness of environmental issues to being a well-educated and responsible Christian. This participant evidently had strong ideas and opinions on what people like him can and should do:

One of the biggest issues that faces us as Christians is the gap in living standards between us in the developed world, and many other people in the world. So we should be trading in a way that gives people reasonable money for their work. That’s important. Where possible we should be buying local goods which don’t have to be air freighted half-way round the world, because of carbon dioxide emissions, and global warming. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 4)

Despite this clarity on both the problem and possible solutions to it, the participant found that other factors get in the way when it comes to trying to make practice changes.

A lot of the shopping gets done at Tesco and gets done as quickly as possible and is done for convenience, to be honest rather than on ethical grounds. We are aware that we should be. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 4)

At Bollington the participant concerned attributed her interest in environmental issues to a close friend she has had since university who leads the Bollington Carbon Revolution group. In discussion with this friend she had developed environmental awareness and attitudes, but had not really questioned her own practices in the light of this. As she explained:

I remember when I started in the Ecoteam I thought well there’s not really anything more that I can do, I don’t really know how I am gonna change anything I do because I didn’t think I was doing anything ... disastrous beforehand... (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)
Note the contrast with the Holy Trinity participant in this type above who listed a whole set of practices that he thinks he should be engaging in. This participant did not really see herself as needing to change, but despite this she was open to the idea of taking on new practices (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3). At the start of the project the only sustainability practice she could think of that she currently performs is some waste separation for recycling.

Despite the relative lack of evidence for this participant type in my data, this is a strong theoretical type due to much work being done in both empirical and theoretical literature on the difficulties of reconciling pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Southerton et al., 2004b). It could be that people are avoiding portraying themselves as an ‘sustainability values’ type in order to reduce the potential cognitive dissonance between pro-sustainability attitudes and anti-sustainability practice.

5.2.3.5 Unengaged

In explaining their past practices, this type of participant reports a lack of interest in environmental issues, and lack of engagement in sustainability practices at the time when they became involved in the project concerned. The unengaged make up a fairly large proportion of the participants interviewed (15/42), an unexpected finding given claims in the literature that a pro-environmental attitude is important for stimulating change (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002). Of those participants that were relatively unaware of sustainability issues before being involved in their respective projects, some stated this explicitly, the others, especially those in the Wakefield Green Gym with learning difficulties, looked confused and could not respond to the question. In general I found it difficult to find tangible quotes for this category, as many just responded ‘no’ to the question and (after prompting) we moved on.

Neither member of the unengaged type at Holy Trinity reported previous sustainability practice (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 3 and 9). Interviewees were rather unspecific about their past behaviour and values, although one evidently made a connection to the concept of fair trade in stating that: “if people are working I think they should have a fair return for what they are doing” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 3). Unengaged respondents from Wakefield Green Gym did not connect what they were doing at the Green Gym with the broader issues of ‘environment’. These participants typically had no history of interest in the environment or gardening and were part of the group mainly for social reasons (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13). In practice this meant that members were more likely to be seen doing gentle work, talking with each other, or watching the other members in action, than highly active in the
Chapter 5: Participant Context

The one unengaged respondent from Reddish Vale said that before the Green Gym she had been only marginally aware of environmental issues through her job:

I didn’t even know [environmental issues] existed really... I work in the chemical industry so I know about how we dispose of our waste sensibly... but I had no idea about organic gardening. I thought it was for people who were tree-huggers! [laughs] I didn’t think it was for me. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

This participant also reported no sustainability practices before she joined the Green Gym. At Meanwood School members were engaged in the walking bus for reasons other than sustainability, including the time it would save in getting their children to school on days that they were working, and a belief that it was good for children to walk to school (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2, 3 and 4). The nature of the activity (walking a group of children to school) did not require a particular commitment to sustainability ideals, and participants did not make that connection.

5.2.3.6 Unengaged and Suspicious

This type consists only of two interviewees, but there was some evidence of this being a larger category in comments by practitioners or other participants. This category includes people that reported being suspicious of nature itself, as well as being suspicious of other people that get involved in environmental activities.

A participant from the Green Gym in Wakefield expressed suspicions of nature, pointing out the discomfort or hazards of being outside all year round with the scheme. She talked extensively about her dislike of wasps and slugs expressing a fear of unpredictable and dangerous nature:

Sometimes in the summer the wasps can be quite annoying. So they go near me and I panic a little bit… I haven’t been stung so far, I’ve been lucky. But wasps can be quite annoying they can come near me in circles, they can go around like that and one went very near me… (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 5)

A few other members mentioned dislike of cold or rainy weather although they are not included in this category (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 2, 3, 8 and 11). At Reddish Vale the second unengaged and suspicious respondent was suspicious of environmental activities and environmentalists before joining the group, having the impression that conservation work was for ‘tree-huggers’ (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17) or people with extreme environmental views:
I think sometimes conservation work and environmental work can have a ... it gives an impression of someone who is very worthy and excels in being good for the environment (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

This latter participant was particularly concerned that people involved in such a project might be very different to her, and was therefore more comfortable about joining a project where the emphasis was on physical activity and socializing as much as conservation.

In other projects this kind of suspicion of sustainability and environmentalists is less visible in those people participating in the projects, but still apparent in the membership of the organisations as a whole. At Holy Trinity, the project had experienced considerable opposition from congregation members who did not see the connection between sustainability and their faith. As one active member recounts, there was antipathy towards the group’s activities:

I had a prominent member of the congregation, a former warden, phone me up and say ‘you are not going to turn your magazine into an ecology thing every month are you?’ I said... we did actually receive an eco award. And the reply was ‘well yes but we shouldn’t be messing around with that we’ve got other things to do!’ (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

Congregation members who were suspicious of environmental problems and environmentalists were unlikely to be involved in a group like the CEG, which explicitly connected its work to environmentalist ideals. This was a considerable contrast to the Green Gym, where multiple goals make it easier for an unengaged and suspicious type to join.

Bollington Carbon Revolution practitioners noted a similar hostility to environmental action, in particular from older members of the Civic Society. As one practitioner elaborates in a vivid stereotype of the kinds of conversation she has experienced:

‘I’ve always left all my lights on ... all my life’ ... and suddenly you’re asking them to turn them all off, ‘I’m eighty for god’s sake’...it’s like somebody who’s addicted to smoking, ... ‘I’m not gonna give up now, I’ve smoked all my life so if it’s gonna kill me I don’t bloody care’ (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

Here, she saw potential participants as resisting change, and in particular change to habits of a lifetime. The story seemed to resonate with other Bollington practitioners who had had similar experiences.

5.2.4 Analysis: participants’ sustainability practice histories

In this section I discuss the implications of the categorisation above. The main point here is that these projects attract a real variety of participants including those who have existing interest in the area, and those that do not. I also link my categorisation back to the literature on
categorising sustainable consumers discussed above, explaining similarities and differences. I then discuss how the participant types are distributed in the different case studies undertaken for the thesis. Finally I discuss the limitations of my categorisation given that it is based on self-presentation.

The first point here then, is that these projects are attracting a real variety of participants. This includes participants that report some history of sustainability practice (23/42 – those in the historically engaged, recently engaged and complementary ethos categories) and participants that report no history of sustainability practice (19/42 – those in the sustainability values, unengaged and unengaged and suspicious categories). The implications of some of these categories are quite interesting. For instance, the distinction between historically and recently engaged participants implies that being ‘engaged’ in sustainability is not one way of being, and that these two different types will have different needs and understandings of a project run by a community-based organisation. The complementary ethos type is also interesting, as the ethos I have identified here (love of gardening, ‘waste-not’, ‘conservation’) may only represent some of the ways that an ethos can impact positively on sustainability. Some creative work in this area could lead to the identification of a whole raft of complementary ways of thinking. This variety suggests that the claims in the literature that participants should have pro-environmental attitudes and understanding to experience change from these projects are over-simplistic (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002). I will reserve judgement on this until I show how these different sustainability practice histories affect change in practice in Chapter 6.

While the categorisation presented above is one of the outputs of this thesis, there are some interesting links to the literature that I reviewed at the beginning of this section. McDonald et al.’s distinction between Beginner Voluntary Simplifier, and Voluntary Simplifier mirrors my historically and recently engaged categories (McDonald et al., 2006). This also ties in to Warde’s idea that there might be a distinction between “long-standing participants and novitiates” (Warde, 2005). Further, McDonald et al. talk of ‘accidental simplifiers’ (those who live simply for other reasons) a category which connects in some ways to the complementary ethos group (ibid.). I am more specific that McDonald et al. here, as my complementary ethos types do not include those that really do live ‘environmentally’ by ‘accident’, so for instance people who are economically poor and therefore do not access many resources. Instead my complementary ethos types ‘simplified’ on purpose, but not for the same purpose as those in the historically or recently engaged types. McDonald et al. point out the possibility of people engaging in practices for different reasons, and my complementary ethos type proved that possibility (ibid.).
Table 5.2 Participant type according to sustainability practice history and their distribution by case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant type</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>HT</th>
<th>GG</th>
<th>WI</th>
<th>BC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historically engaged in sustainability practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>HT1, HT5, HT8, HT10</td>
<td>GG7, GG18</td>
<td>W18</td>
<td>BC1, BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently engaged in sustainability practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>HT2, HT7</td>
<td>GG1, GG11, GG12, GG15</td>
<td>W11, W12, W13, W14, W15, W16, W17</td>
<td>BC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in ethos with complementary practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>HT6</td>
<td>GG2, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG8, GG9, GG13, GG14, GG16</td>
<td>W18</td>
<td>BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding sustainability values</td>
<td></td>
<td>HT4</td>
<td>GG5, GG17</td>
<td>W18</td>
<td>BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unengaged in sustainability practices</td>
<td>MS1, MS2, MS3, MS4</td>
<td>HT3, HT9</td>
<td>GG2, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG8, GG9, GG13, GG14, GG16</td>
<td>W18</td>
<td>BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unengaged and suspicious of ideas of sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GG5, GG17</td>
<td>W18</td>
<td>BC3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of different participant types across cases here is interesting, because it showed considerable variation. The distribution of participant types by case is shown in Table 5.2. In some cases all participants were in one category (Women’s Institute and Meanwood School) others included participants from all or most categories (Green Gym, Holy Trinity). This seems to have impacted somewhat on the experiences of the participants involved, as those involved in groups with less variation in participant types had less conflict around issues of sustainability within the group. I revisit an issue raised in Chapter 4 on community context here, where I noted that some groups experienced more internal conflict than others (4.7.1). For instance, all the Women’s Institute members interviewed came into one category: ‘complementary ethos’. These interviewees also shared demographic characteristics, mostly being in the 60-69 age group. This made them a highly unified group of participants, whose experience of working towards pro-environmental change was relatively unchallenging given that they were working with ‘like-minded’ people. On the other hand, at Holy Trinity and in Bollington, where the variation in the host community (Bollington, Holy Trinity church) was much broader, the practitioners regularly had to defend and justify themselves to the unengaged.
and suspicious members of the congregation. This issue of how unified groups are will be discussed in more detail in the analysis section of the outcomes chapter (6.2.5).

There is one problem with my categorisation here, in that it relies on the way that participants tell the story of their involvement in the respective group. Information gathered during the interview process was self-report but this is a common feature of much research in the area of sustainable consumption (whether based on survey or interview data). One of the issues of concern with self-report data is that it is difficult to know whether people are telling the truth, or performing to the interview, given that they are aware that the interview is about their sustainability practices. To some extent there is little that can be done about self-report data, as it is very difficult to create data on practices in any other way. I came across various more subtle problems in my data, however, which affected the exact categorisation of each interviewee in my typology. This relates to the way that people talk about themselves, and in particular if they are comfortable or confident in talking about the ‘good’ things that they have done. So for instance some interviewees seemed to hesitate in talking about previous practices in order to avoid looking like they were showing off (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8 and 10). Others were much happier to list sustainability practices (see quote from Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2 under 5.2.3.2). In a sense the participants’ categorisation I have presented above is what people say they are like. This was particularly problematic with the distinction between sustainability values and unengaged. Interviewees could be avoiding cognitive dissonance by saying that they were previously unengaged, when perhaps they were aware of sustainability issues before the project, and have just taken on behaviours since their involvement in the project. Equally those in the ‘unengaged’ group could be presenting themselves as previously unengaged when they are just a lot more engaged now. In other words, in retrospect a minor interest in sustainability issues may look insignificant when you have taken large steps towards a sustainable lifestyle. In the psychology literature this is termed ‘self-presentation’ and studies have found that people tend to be modest with friends, and ‘favourably self-enhancing’ with strangers (Tice et al., 1995).

In summary then, the categorisation that I present above helps to make sense of participants’ sustainability practices as they enter the projects under study. It incorporates the way that participants talk about practices, as well as about their understandings and values relating to sustainability issues. The categorisation shows that people present themselves as coming to these projects from a wide variety of starting points regarding sustainability practice. This includes people who have a long history of interest and practice in sustainability, to those who are suspicious of environment and environmentalists when they join the group.
5.3 The participant and volunteering practice

It was particularly important to investigate the community-orientation of my sample to see where members resemble and differ from the volunteering norm. Note that the purposive (and therefore un-representative) nature of my sample did not allow for statistical generalisation about those involved in community-based organisations working on sustainability. It did allow for a sense of who might be getting involved in these projects and how they might be different to volunteers more generally. It was unlikely that community projects on sustainability would appeal to all segments of society, and understanding which segments therefore have potential to be involved in such projects as volunteers allowed for a better estimation of the potential effects of community-based action on sustainability.

There are different types of volunteer, and those involved in the case studies for my research fit into a particular sub-group. The Cabinet Office makes a distinction between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ volunteers following their survey work in this area, which defines ‘formal’ volunteering as:

Giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment (for example the protection of wildlife or the improvement of public open spaces). (Cabinet Office, 2007)

This evidently includes those involved in community-based organisations on sustainability projects. In addition, they make a distinction between regular (at least monthly) and occasional (less frequently than once a month) volunteering. The former (‘regular’) is also representative of all the members of groups I have investigated which are active anything from daily (Meanwood School) to once a month. These distinctions made by the Cabinet Office are also reflected in their survey data, which makes for a helpful comparative source for my results.

The data discussed in this section are taken from both the quantitative participant questionnaire and from qualitative interviews with participants. The quantitative data are taken from questions on community-orientation included in the structured section of the participant interview. The qualitative data discussed in the section on community orientation below stem from a question in the interviews with participants which asked: ‘Are you involved in any other activities in the community?’ . Interviewees were also prompted on various types of activity they could be involved in. Evidence for participants’ involvement in the group under study is drawn from a question in the participant interview which asked ‘Can you tell me about your involvement in the group?’.
5.3.1 Community orientation of participants

The sustainable consumption literature on wellbeing suggests that projects in the community on sustainability issues could result in increased social capital for participants (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). As such, establishing the participants’ perception of social capital in their own community was a matter of interest, in order to be able to estimate the change that occurred through being involved in the community project under study. To do this I measured the involvement that participants have in community activities alongside the one being studied, the level of trust participants have in their neighbours, and their satisfaction with the places that they inhabit. The data addressing these issues comes from both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires and I treat these in turn in the following sections.

5.3.1.1 Qualitative data on involvement in the community

Each interviewee was asked if they were involved in other activities in their community. There were considerable contrasts between the cases under study here. In two of the cases (Holy Trinity and Women’s Institute) almost all participants were actively volunteering both for further activities within the parent organisation (church or institute) as well as for other organisations within the community. All the participants at Meanwood School were engaged in other voluntary activities within the school itself. In contrast those in the Green Gym and in Bollington were far less active in their communities, and most were only volunteering in the organisations under study. Table 5.3 summarises the levels of concurrent voluntary activity for each participant and by case.

In the Meanwood School walking bus case, participants were relatively active as volunteers elsewhere in the school, participating in events such as school fairs and discos, and three of the four had more active involvement with the walking bus (setting up a website to organise cover, and campaigning regarding road safety). The deputy head teacher comments that the school draws on a limited pool of capable parents to take on this kind of initiative: “you know who your volunteers are … the more sensible strong parents who you know you can trust with groups of children” (Meanwood School Practitioner, 2005). All the participants at Meanwood School recognised the importance of volunteering or more broadly ‘doing their bit’, although none of them volunteered outside the school. As one participant put it: “I just think it’s a good thing to do” (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2), and another:

Well I feel I’m doing my bit for the school, I suppose for the school community.
I do believe that if we use it then I should, you know, volunteer to help, because
without the volunteers it’s going to fold. (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 3)

At Holy Trinity all interviewees but one (HT3) were active volunteers within the church alongside their CEG involvement. These active members all named more than one activity in which they participated, including sitting on committees, helping with worship and community

Table 5.3 Level of concurrent voluntary activity by participant and case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in more than one group</th>
<th>Meanwood School</th>
<th>Holy Trinity</th>
<th>Green Gym</th>
<th>Women’s Institute</th>
<th>Bollington Carbon Revolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HT1, HT3, HT4, HT7, HT8, HT10</td>
<td>GG15, GG16, GG18</td>
<td>WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7, WI8</td>
<td>BC4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major involvement in group under study</td>
<td>MS1, MS2, MS3</td>
<td>HT2, HT5, HT6, HT9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor involvement in group under study</td>
<td>MS4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other community involvement</td>
<td>GG1, GG2, GG3, GG4, GG5, GG6, GG8, GG7, GG9, GG11, GG12, GG13, GG14, GG17</td>
<td>BC1, BC2, BC3, BC5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

activities (visiting sick parishioners). To give a taste of the range of activities that individuals were involved in here are two quotes from participants:

So I have always worked at Holy Trinity. Menial tasks. I was the church lavatory cleaner for 21 years. I did the church garden for 19 years… for 12 years I became a youth leader in our church and … I joined the refectory 20 years ago. I was one of the founder members. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6)

PCC, Fundraising committee, Social events committee, The fundraising committee is quite a new one... There’s the Ecology Group. I edit the parish magazine. Sidesman (that’s what I was doing on Sunday)... Oh yes, the diocesan earth care group. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

Most participants had been involved in church activities either passively or actively for many years, including three for over 60 years (elderly members who were born in the parish),
two for over 20 years and three for over 10 years. The remaining two interviewees had attended for less than 5 years. In addition, the Holy Trinity participants were rather active as volunteers outside the church. Six of the interviewees were involved with volunteering outside of the church, including chairing local groups (rail user group – HT4, Craven and district Mind – HT1), campaigning activities – HT8, involvement with local people (visiting the elderly – HT7, running cycling proficiency in school – HT4). One member has an MBE for services as a volunteer (HT6), including many years work in delivering meals on wheels, another is a local councillor (HT3).

Of the Women’s Institute interviewees all members were involved in some way with other activities in their community (many in the church, or in voluntary roles for the elderly or disabled). One of the practitioners in this case finds this typical of WI members:

> What you tend to find within our members… they don’t just consider the WI. They do actually get involved in a lot of other things. The WI members tend to be involved in other church, village hall committees, helping out in schools charity shop volunteering, and so on... (Women's Institute Practitioner 1, 2006)

To give an example, one respondent sang in the church choir and was on the PCC of the church, was involved in her local community centre committee and did domestic jobs there, volunteered as a school governor, and sat on the local children’s society committee for fundraising (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 4). Interviewees were also all involved with other activities within the Women’s Institute – as members of other activity groups such as craft group and choir, and in many cases in organisational roles within their own Women’s Institutes and at federation and county level (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6).

The contrast with Green Gym and Bollington cases here is most likely connected to the motivation for involvement in the groups. At the Green Gym only three members were involved in other voluntary activities (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15; Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16 and 18), and in Bollington only one peripheral member (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4). For the Green Gym members, the main motivation for involvement was personal, with members enjoying the experience of being outside in the fresh air, doing physical work. As such, the community-oriented aspect of their work (regenerating allotment and country park sites) was not the main reason they were involved. In addition, people with the demographic of the Green Gym members (many of whom are disabled) are much less likely to volunteer (Kitchen et al., 2006; Cabinet Office, 2007). In contrast, church, school and Women’s Institute groups are naturally more community-facing. The Bollington case was different again, as members joined because of a mutual interest in environmental issues and a vision for what their community could do for the environment, rather than an emphasis on community building.
in itself. In addition, all but one interviewee had small children or full-time jobs, and interviewees commented on the difficulties of setting aside time in a busy schedule for voluntary activities (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1, 2 and 5). As one respondent explained, she had time to join an Ecoteam but only due to personal circumstances allowing it, and those personal circumstances had prevented her being involved in other activities:

It’s something that I was very interested in but I was coping with a newborn baby at the time so I didn’t want to take that much on but at the time when the Ecoteams started, I was at the stage where I had a little bit more time on my hands (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

In summary, it seems that there are several types of participant in this study with regards involvement in community: those that are more extensively involved as volunteers in the organisation under study, those that are involved as volunteers in both the organisation under study and in other organisations, and those that are not involved in other community activity. Participants divided into these types according to which specific community-based organisation they were involved in, with some more conducive (or perhaps attractive) to serial volunteering than others.

5.3.1.2 Quantitative data on attitudes to community

Participants were asked a series of structured questions about their attitudes to their community and to their neighbours in order to establish their levels of trust and satisfaction in their places of residence. These are standard questions from surveys of both the general population and the volunteering population that incorporate social capital factors (Office for National Statistics, 2002; Kitchen et al., 2006).

Of the respondents in my research, 37 (82%) said they liked living in their neighbourhood, 2 (4%) said not. This compares favourably to formal volunteer averages of 56% and 22% (Kitchen et al., 2006). In response to the question ‘do you trust people in your neighbourhood’ 26 participants (68%) said most or many, 9 (24%) said a few and 3 (8%) said none. Again, this compares well to the national data – where 57% said most or many, 35% said a few and 8% said none (Office for National Statistics, 2002) and data on regular formal volunteers, where 59% said many or some, 24% said a few and 14% said none (Kitchen et al., 2006). These figures are particularly strong considering that 15 of the Green Gym participants come from deprived areas where there are serious social problems making their neighbourhoods rather difficult places to live (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006).

Note that many of the Green Gym respondents did not answer the question represented in Figure 5.1. Here, 86% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that by working together,
people can influence decisions that affect the neighbourhood, and 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This compares extremely favourably to the national data where only 56% of people agreed, or strongly agreed with this statement and 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Office for National Statistics, 2002). It seems that the respondents in this research feel particularly empowered regarding their ability to change the way that their neighbourhood is run. Perhaps this is not surprising since my respondents are a group of people active in their communities.

In summary then, quantitative work on community orientation shows that respondents in my sample were both happier in and more trusting of their communities than the general volunteering population represented in the work by Kitchen et al. (ibid.). They also expressed more empowerment to make a difference within their communities.

5.3.2 Participant’s involvement in the group under study

In order to fully understand participants’ volunteering practice, one final piece of the picture needs some attention: the participant’s involvement in the group under study. This varied between case studies, as different projects demanded different levels of participation. This was briefly discussed in the previous chapter with relation to the organisational resources that a community-based organisation offers (4.7.2). Some of the cases run activities which require regular attendance by a small group (Meanwood School, Green Gym, Women’s Institute, Bollington Ecoteams) others are less formal and may involve some ‘participants’ merely...
attending events or not being so heavily involved in the organisation (other Bollington activities, Holy Trinity). In addition, some cases specifically target sustainability practices of their participants, and others take the form of an activity which relates to sustainability (Meanwood School and Green Gym).

Table 5.4 makes clear that most participants were actively involved due to the nature of the cases. In two cases (Bollington and Holy Trinity) some participants are less centrally involved. At Holy Trinity, members came into the ‘peripherally’ involved category if they did not consider themselves members of the group. This meant that they attended events, or helped out with the tasks associated with the Christian Ecology Group, but they still did not refer to themselves as ‘members’. In their own words:

I’m really only involved peripherally. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)

Yes I’ve been in the background. I haven’t been on a committee and I haven’t taken the presentation but I did clear the bottles [for recycling]. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6)

I am not really involved with that but I do support their things… the things they do... (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meanwood School</th>
<th>Holy Trinity</th>
<th>Green Gym</th>
<th>Women’s Institute</th>
<th>Bollington Carbon Revolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively involved:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustainability-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice driven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HT1, HT8, HT10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7, WI8</td>
<td>BC1, BC2, BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively involved:</td>
<td>MS1, MS2, MS3,</td>
<td></td>
<td>GG1, GG2,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustainability-</td>
<td>MS4</td>
<td></td>
<td>GG3, GG4,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity driven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GG5, GG6,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MS1, MS2, MS3, MS4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GG7, GG8,</td>
<td></td>
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<td>GG9, GG11,</td>
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<td>GG12, GG13,</td>
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<td>GG14, GG15,</td>
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<td>GG16, GG17,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GG18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peripherally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved</td>
<td>HT2, HT3, HT4,</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>HT5, HT6, HT7,</td>
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<td>HT9</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Bollington the less involved participant is also someone who attends and works with
the group more generally in his voluntary capacity on the Civic Society (the group’s parent
organisation). As he puts it:

They gave a presentation to the Civic Society, I’ve been there when they’ve
done that, they’ve had a display at the Discovery Centre in Bollington ... so I
saw that... I’m not a member of the group and have not got directly involved
with them other than when we’ve interacted on the Town Plan. (Bollington
Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4)

The significance of some of the members being more or less involved with the group
will become apparent in Chapter 6.

5.3.3 Analysis: participants’ volunteering practices

Part 5.3 has dealt with the participants of these case studies’ volunteering practices. I
first looked at how community-oriented the participants in this study were, using qualitative and
quantitative data from participant interviews to comment on their involvement. Second, I
commented on participants’ involvement in the group under study. The main point of interest
here, is that participants in these projects had varied existing volunteering practices, and varied
community-orientation. The variation, however, is explained by the particular project in which a
participant is involved, with each case study showing some consistency in terms of its
volunteers’ broader involvement in the community. Case studies could broadly be characterised
as taking place in two types of organisation: either community-based organisations that attract
mainly new volunteers (Bollington, Green Gym), or community-based organisations that attract
serial volunteers (Meanwood School, Holy Trinity, Women’s Institute).

When looking at these results in total, some interesting points arise. For instance, there
seems to be some connection between results on the community-orientation of participants, and
the demographic of group members as described in part 3.4.4. The data on community-
orientation suggests that participants at Bollington and the Green Gyms are not serial volunteers
(they do not volunteer elsewhere) but are still being attracted to join voluntary schemes. In both
cases this seems to be due to the specific activities that the group promotes being either of
benefit or of interest to the participants involved. The demographic of Green Gym members
supports this proposed connection, as participants are markedly less educated and less employed
than the general volunteering population (see 3.4.4.2). The demographic data on Bollington,
incidently, is not remarkably different than the norm. On the other hand, members of Meanwood
School, Holy Trinity and the Women’s Institute are serial volunteers. In these cases, it seems
that participants are accustomed to volunteering, but they are usually engaged with issues that
are not directly connected to narrow definitions of sustainability (such as social, health, child safety related). These volunteers have taken on sustainability concerns in complement with some of the other activities that they are currently engaged in as a result of the case study projects. They also have some demographic characteristics more typical of regular volunteers (older, more educated).

My data suggests two models of involvement in community for sustainability practice projects. In the first, atypical volunteers are involved in the community as a result of these kinds of project. This suggests that the literature that claims that these projects will bring increased social capital to participants is possible (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). In the second, serial volunteers share their attention in volunteering between sustainability and other social issues. These second type are unlikely to gain additional social capital from volunteering for sustainability, since they are already actively engaged elsewhere. Further discussion on the relationship between social outcomes and these projects is included in the outcomes chapter (6.3.7).

5.4 Commentary on the relation between participants’ sustainability practice histories and volunteering practice

This chapter has dealt with the context of participants in sustainability projects run by community-based organisations. It is clear from sections on the participants’ sustainability practice (5.2) and the participants’ volunteering practice (5.3) above that participants vary considerably. Regarding sustainability practice, participants range from people who have a long history of engagement, to those with a suspicion of sustainability and environmentalism. Regarding volunteering practice, participants range from those who volunteer extensively elsewhere, to those who are volunteering for the first time in the activity under question. In addition, one of the cases (Green Gym) includes many members who are non-traditional volunteers (disabled, unemployed, and with limited education).

The final question that remains to be answered here then, is whether there is any relationship between these two elements: in other words is there a connection between a history of sustainability practice and the level of involvement that someone reports in the community? This will tell me if volunteers in community-based organisations are inherently more likely to have sustainability practices than the general population. Table 5.5 shows a comparison of sustainability practice categories with volunteering practice categories by participant. Note, first, that this is a relatively small and unrepresentative sample. However, it is difficult to see any pattern of sustainability practice here between those who are substantially involved in community action, and those who have no other community involvement. There are perhaps
slightly more historically engaged and complementary ethos types who are involved in more than one group, but the table is certainly not conclusive on that front. I recommend further research in this area to resolve the issue.

Table 5.5 Community involvement of participants outside the activity in question in comparison to their history in sustainability practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Practice -&gt;</th>
<th>Historically Engaged</th>
<th>Recently Engaged</th>
<th>Complementary ethos</th>
<th>Sustainability values</th>
<th>Unengaged</th>
<th>Unengaged and suspicious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in more than one group</td>
<td>HT1, HT8, HT10, WI8, GG18, BC4</td>
<td>HT7</td>
<td>GG15, WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7</td>
<td>HT4</td>
<td>HT3, GG16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major involvement in one group</td>
<td>HT5</td>
<td>HT2</td>
<td></td>
<td>HT9, MS1, MS2, MS3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor involvement in one group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other community involvement</td>
<td>GG7, BC1, BC5</td>
<td>BC2</td>
<td>GG1, GG11, GG12</td>
<td>BC3</td>
<td>GG2, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG8, GG9, G13, G14</td>
<td>GG5, GG17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter looked at the context of participants that are engaged in sustainability practice projects run by community-based organisations. I found that participants had a range of sustainability practice histories, including people who had a long history of engagement and those who were previously unengaged with sustainability issues. The categorisation of participants according to sustainability practice histories that I made here allowed for some interesting insights, including the complementary ethos category which is made up of people who practice sustainably for reasons connected to a different ethos. I then looked at participants’ volunteering practice, and found two types in my sample: those that are serial volunteers (mainly seen in the Meanwood School, Holy Trinity and Women’s Institute cases) and those for whom the case in question represents their first experience of volunteering (mainly in the Bollington and Green Gym cases). In comparing quantitative data on community orientation of participants I found that participants in my sample were happier in their communities and more empowered to live there than the general volunteering population. Finally I concluded that there was no obvious relationship between volunteering practice and current levels of sustainability practice as participants started the projects.
In the next chapter I will explore how participants changed as a result of being involved in these projects. This includes how their sustainability practice changed, but also reports additional outcomes experienced by participants.
6 Outcomes

6.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the third and fourth research questions: ‘What effects do sustainability projects initiated by community-based organisations have on participants’ sustainability practice?’ and ‘What other effects do such initiatives have on participants?’. As such, it outlines both the sustainability practice outcomes and additional outcomes that the five cases have had for the participants involved. This chapter draws mainly on participant interviews (both qualitative and quantitative sections) using practitioner interviews for verification and elaboration.

One of the key goals of this thesis is to find out how involvement in community-based organisations’ activities on sustainability affects a participant’s sustainability practices (research question 3). Here, I categorise the ways in which participants’ sustainability practices were affected by intensity. Participants reported a range of effects, from substantial practice change to no change at all. In the analysis, I assess the impact of the participants’ history of sustainability practices and the nature of a participant’s involvement in the community-based organisation in question on their sustainability practice outcomes. The main finding here is that the participant’s history of sustainability practice, the nature of a participant’s involvement in the community-based organisation, the cohesiveness of the community-based organisation and the nature of activities run by the community-based organisation all impact on the intensity of sustainability practice change.

While the primary aim of this research project is to work out how sustainability practices are affected by involvement, it has been suggested that the additional outcomes of these projects may be the motivating factor for volunteers involved in community sustainability (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). In researching the cases for this thesis I found considerable variability regarding the additional outcomes that participants reported. In the analysis here I assess the relationship between sustainability practices and additional outcomes, as well as other factors such as community-orientation of participants. The main finding is that there does not seem to be a direct connection between sustainability practice change and additional outcomes. Instead positive outcomes are experienced by new volunteers, and negative outcomes mainly by those who volunteer extensively elsewhere.

The two outcome types will be dealt with in turn in this chapter, as ‘sustainability practice outcomes for participants’ (6.2) and ‘additional outcomes for participants’ (6.3).
6.2 Sustainability practice outcomes for participants

In this section I begin by presenting primary qualitative data on the types of changes in sustainability practice that participants experienced (6.2.1). Second, I present quantitative data on sustainability practice, in comparison to national data gathered by Defra (6.2.2). Third, I use secondary data on a few of the case studies as a means of verifying my own data on outcomes (6.2.3). Fourth, I discuss the secondary sustainability outcomes related to these projects (6.2.4). Finally I present an analysis of the results and conclusions linking back to the initial categorisation of participants according to their sustainability practice history and to their involvement in the community as detailed in Chapter 5 (6.2.5).

6.2.1 Sustainability practice outcome types

In this section I present the sustainability practice outcomes for participants in the case studies of this thesis by category. This categorisation is based on how the participant tells the story of their involvement in the community-based organisation, and how it affected their practice which relates to sustainability. It is also intended to show the intensity of outcome change by participant in a qualitative way. Note that outcomes are categorised principally by intensity of practice change, given that sustainability practice is the focus of my research questions. Participants’ reports of changing attitudes, know-how and awareness (discursive consciousness), which sometimes go hand in hand with changes in practice, and sometimes do not, are also detailed here. The different outcomes that are reported by participants are categorised in Table 6.1.

In summary then, 12 of the 45 participants reported no change at all (final row Table 6.1), a further 8 only reported changes in discursive consciousness elements (for instance attitudes, values, awareness or know-how, fourth row Table 6.1). Of those that did report change in practice this ranged from substantial change (reported by 2 respondents) to incremental changes (several practices strengthened or altered by involvement in the community-based organisation, 13 participants) to single practice changes (8 participants). Each of these categories is discussed in detail and with reference to examples below. This includes discussion of both practice change and discursive consciousness elements.
Table 6.1 Summary of typology of changes to sustainability practice with definitions and corresponding affected participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of outcome</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Participants affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial change to sustainability practices</td>
<td>Participant reported that their sustainability practices were changed substantially through membership of the community-based organisations (CBO, see definition on p. 7).</td>
<td>GG16, GG17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental change to sustainability practices</td>
<td>Participant reported that several elements of their sustainability practice were changed through membership of the CBO</td>
<td>HT8, HT10, GG18, WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7, BC1, BC2, BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to a single sustainability practice</td>
<td>Participant reported changes to one aspect of their sustainability practice through involvement in the CBO</td>
<td>MS1, MS3, MS4, HT2, HT3, HT9, GG1, WI8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness</td>
<td>Participant reported that their pro-sustainability attitudes, values, awareness or know-how were changed through involvement in the CBO</td>
<td>HT1, HT5, HT7, GG2, GG5, GG11, GG13, GG15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>Participant did not report any change in their sustainability practice through involvement in the CBO</td>
<td>MS2, HT4, HT6, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG7, GG8, GG9, GG12, BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.1.1 Substantial practice change

Two of the participants interviewed reported substantial practice change as a result of involvement in the community-based organisation in question’s project on sustainability. Here, participants reported substantial change in practices, in combination with changes to discursive consciousness elements (attitudes and awareness of sustainability issues). Both of these participants were members of the Reddish Vale Green Gym, and had joined the group with a limited prior interest in environmental issues (categorised as unengaged in Chapter 5). These participants framed their ‘substantial’ change in the context of their previous lack of interest, and in connection with their enjoyment of nature and the outdoors through membership (note that the first part of the first quotation was also given in Chapter 5):

I had no idea about organic gardening, I thought it was for people who were tree-huggers! [laughs] I didn’t think it was for me. But now, I’m totally, totally on board with it all. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)
We’ve seen the changing of the seasons... up close every Saturday, and really felt it. I’ve felt more sympathetic... to the cause, the need for change really... you see the changes over the year you think we can play a role... I am much more sympathetic and understanding of environmental issues. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

Both participants, reported multiple changes in practice, with changes to shopping habits (organic and local where possible), gardening practices (feeding the birds, no chemical use), for GG16 waste reduction (including composting and plastics recycling) and for GG17 using her bike for transport where possible (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16 and 17). This reported practice change is particularly notable as unlike some of the other cases the Reddish Vale project activities were not specifically focused on practice change, rather on food production, conservation and nature preservation (sustainability-activity based rather than sustainability-practice based, see 5.3.2).

In terms of discursive consciousness changes, these two participants had in common both new-found pro-sustainability attitudes and an increased awareness of sustainability issues that linked to their enthusiastic adoption of sustainability practices (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 17). GG16 for instance changed her values on organic and free-range food (“yes it’s very expensive but let’s eat less. Then we don’t throw anything away”), no longer felt that her garden has to be neat and tidy (instead gardening ‘for nature’), was fervently opposed to invasive non-native species, and experienced a more general attitude change following a realisation that the ecosystems around her are fragile (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16). She put this realisation down to: “just really being more aware of what was around me and how easy it would be to lose it if you don’t think about what you do to the environment” (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16). In describing her antipathy to Himalayan Balsam (an invasive species) GG16 recounts a recent encounter:

A friend of mine ... we were walking in Wales and she had a wildflower book, and blow me, it was down as Indian Balsam, but it was actually in. This book of wildflowers had it down as a wild flower brought over by the Victorians. I said excuse me can I rip this page out! (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

GG17 felt guilty about using the car since her involvement in the Green Gym (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17), and, as inferred in the large quote given at the top of the section, felt that her exposure to nature through being involved in the Green Gym led her to be more ‘sympathetic’ to environmental issues.

Changes in awareness of sustainability issues included both increased knowledge and increased know-how for participants. Some of the changes that these participants took on were connected to learning on the Reddish Vale site. As GG16 put it:
Because in the community garden we work on the compost I now know hands on how to manage a compost. It’s one thing reading the leaflet it’s absolutely fantastic turning the compost when it is ready for use. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

Despite the discovery of sustainability issues that these participants experienced and the connected change in attitudes and awareness, both of these participants were aware of the boundaries to sustainability practices inherent in the contexts in which they live. Both gave examples of this in relation to inability to avoid using the car for journeys they make. As GG 17 put it:

It made me think about how much I use the car, and when I’m using the car I’m feeling a bit guilty about it... but now I work for [organisation], there isn’t public transport direct to my office and I’ve got a lot of work right across the city... it’s pretty hard. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

In summary, these participants experience substantial change in practice as well as changes in discursive consciousness (awareness, attitudes, and know-how).

### 6.2.1.2 Incremental practice change

Thirteen participants experienced small changes to a series of sustainability practices or ‘incremental practice change’. This amounted to a strengthening or reinvigoration of existing practices (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8 and 10; Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18; Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1-7; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1 and 2) and/or a discovery of new practices (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1-7; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3). These participants all had some sort of history of engagement (mostly historically engaged, and complementary ethos types, with some members from the recently engaged and sustainability values types). Participants did not report substantial attitude change on sustainability. Many reported changes in awareness of sustainability including general awareness change, and change in knowing-how to implement sustainability practice. As the activities under each case were different, the results here are presented by treating the participants in each case that reported incremental change together, and for each case I include a discussion of both practice, and discursive consciousness elements (attitudes, awareness and know-how).

Incremental change is typically associated with the Ecoteams process, and participants from the Women’s Institute and Bollington Ecoteams make up the main body of respondents categorised as experiencing incremental practice change. All but one of the Women’s Institute members interviewed made multiple changes to their sustainability practices following their involvement in the Ecoteams programme (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1-7). An
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

indication of the sorts of changes that members were making, is exemplified by the following list which shows all the changes listed by one member, and which is typical of the other participants (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1):

- Buys eggs locally;
- Uses energy-efficient lightbulbs;
- Kettle filled appropriately for use;
- Rarely uses cooker, relies on microwave;
- Not leaving appliances on standby;
- Bought second water butt;
- Walks more and uses bus when possible;
- Keeps reusable shopping bag in handbag.

Changes were more likely to mark strengthening of existing practices (for instance adding a second water butt) than adding new sustainable practices (for instance buying eggs locally) due to the nature of the participants and their existing behaviours. Another member characterised this strengthening of practices (in reference to recycling) as follows:

I think I did consciously make a very conscious effort to recycle anything that I could. Whereas before if I was in a hurry it might have got put in the bin. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

Attitude changes among these Women’s Institute participants were less substantial and tended to touch just one area of interest rather than a whole set of ideas. These changes often amount to a slight modification of opinions on some issues. For instance, one respondent discussed her views on climate change:

I am still not completely convinced that it’s all to do with what man is doing, because things have happened since the beginning of time haven’t they, on its own without us doing anything. I suppose with the advance in technology we are causing a lot of damage. Especially with our cars. I think it probably is a lot to do with us and we need to clean up our act. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

Although the respondent above was still not ‘completely convinced’ about climate change, she started off as a substantial sceptic. Others also noted smaller changes, such as strengthened beliefs in the importance of leaving a good world for their grandchildren (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3 and 5) and increased positive attitudes to local business (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1 and 4). Only one respondent in the Women’s Institute talked of attitude change in more general terms:
It isn’t until you are faced with these changes that are actually happening, that actually become more tangible that you can see... well... wasn’t it wonderful to think that somebody could put an aeroplane in the air in [my mother’s] lifetime, but on the other hand look what it’s done to our environment. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

WI5 reassessed her ideas of progress in the light of the Ecoteams work, and reflection over the recent death of her mother. In effect these mainly small changes in attitude amount to a finding that Women’s Institute members that started the process with a complementary ethos, did not change their ethos substantially as a result of involvement, and certainly did not adopt an explicitly environmental ethos.

Most Women’s Institute participants that experienced incremental practice change, also reported substantial learning (or awareness changes) as a result of the Ecoteams process. This ranged from absorbing new factual information about particular impacts (general awareness), to ways of practicing sustainability (know-how awareness). Examples of general awareness and know-how awareness follow in turn:

Things like babies’ nappies that go to landfill... I’d never even thought of it... when you think of all the babies and how many nappies are used a day... and the thousands and thousands of people that are using them... there must be mountains of them... (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

When it comes to sort of clearing old things out of the house... I think now could I recycle it somewhere ... like computers can maybe be sent to Africa rather than just going in the skip. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 7)

Participants commented that learning about sustainability was an important outcome of the process for them. As one participant put it: “I thought it was a very useful thing. There were all sorts of things that I learned.” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 4), and another “It just makes you think about usage of everything you do” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 6).

In Bollington, all the interviewed Ecoteams members (BC1, 2 and 3) also talked of having made incremental changes to their practices. One participant expressed this as follows:

I suppose ‘cause we had some of the changes in place ... perhaps it won’t make a huge impact on our carbon footprint but we’re making any further changes we can make … (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

This was a historically engaged participant who found ways to make small changes in his practice. Indeed, participants with a range of sustainability practice backgrounds, made a range of incremental changes to their waste, energy and transport practices that were targeted through the Ecoteams process. As one participant explained:
I mean the other sorts of things I’ve done through Ecoteams are just simple things like signed up for the mail preference service... I do buy more things that are made from recycled material or actually really look for things that I can recycle packaging wise... just little things like remembering to take bags with us when we go shopping... (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

Here, the participant improved on existing practices, while another member (BC3) who was less active to start with made more fundamental steps. BC3 increased the range of materials she recycles, making small water and energy saving changes (using a hippo in the toilet, switching lights off in rooms) (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3). The changes she made were rather straightforward, and she pointed out that she was unwilling to make more difficult changes:

I could probably walk to work because it’s only about three miles away from where I live, so it’s physically possible to do that, but because of the issues due to sort of times scales and things like that ... it wasn’t something I particularly felt that I could change (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

None of the participants that reported incremental practice change in Bollington reported changes in attitudes as a result of the Ecoteams process. As they put it: “I don’t think they have changed particularly no” (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1) and “my baseline attitude towards them hasn’t changed” (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2). This probably relates to their already holding positive attitudes to sustainability issues:

I would have said that I had a positive attitude to begin with in terms of being prepared to do things myself and being prepared to have a look at things so I don’t know how much my attitudes have changed, I guess I was open to try new things… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

On the other hand, participants did report changes in awareness and know-how through involvement in the group. At Bollington, one of the members talked of learning more about technical aspects of sustainability, in particular with relation to energy use and production, as a result of his involvement in the group:

[I’m] starting to learn more about practical things like energy ratings for buildings ... codes for buildings and ... about the different renewable technologies and things like that (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

Most of the other changes in participant awareness related to ‘know-how’ of sustainability practices. BC2 also learned about different options for taking action on sustainability. As she put it: “what has changed is that I know more about what I can do to help” (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2). BC3 started the process thinking that there
was little more she could do, however, the host of information about options for living sustainably that were brought up in conversation made her realise that she need not spend a lot of money in order to live sustainably, which seems to have been a barrier to her acting previously. As she explained:

I think if anything it makes you aware that you can take particular steps and there are certain actions that you can perform for quite a low cost, that I wouldn’t have known about before, had I not been involved in the group because I wouldn't have known that this particular item existed or how to source it or anything like that… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

Incremental practice change also took place in organisations that did not use the Ecoteams process, with participants at Holy Trinity and the Green Gym reporting multiple small changes to practices. As one of the Holy Trinity participants expressed it, the CEG’s activities’ effect on the ethical nature of her shopping practices was that: “It’s just made it more so” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8). Another participant listed a series of changes to her shopping practices brought on by membership of the Christian Ecology Group.

I try to buy fair trade things when I can. I buy organic things and locally produced goods, like I’ll go to the local butcher now. That’s the green pages I think that made me more aware of that. So rather than buying meat from the supermarket I will go to the butcher, and the egg stall and for cheese... I mean I do still go to the supermarket, but I try to buy locally if I can, and fair trade things. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10)

Changes in discursive consciousness for Holy Trinity respondents followed a similar pattern to those described above. Again, rather limited changes in attitudes were reported with the most substantial indication of change being one respondent reporting that her involvement “really made me more determined to do what I could.” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10). There was some change in awareness of sustainability issues, in particular one of the respondents reported learning from the Fair Trade fashion show put on by the Christian Ecology Group as she says: “I think it opened people’s eyes to what was going on, and the views of people out there who are working for a pittance.” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10). Both respondents at Holy Trinity who reported incremental change learned more about local options for sustainability practice through involvement in the group (change in ‘know-how’). As one of them put it, her membership led to her “just being aware of the places where you can get things…” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8). Indeed, in the indented quote above, HT10 points out that the ‘green pages’ (Holy Trinity’s listings of local sustainable suppliers and services) has changed her awareness of local provision. The other respondent from Holy Trinity
also mentioned the green pages as a source of local information that helps her maintain her sustainability practices:

> just occasionally I think ‘Ah!’ a computer, where can I get rid of it… and then if you look through you find it in there. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8).

At Reddish Vale Green Gym, one participant reported incremental practice change, being more likely to buy locally, and an increase in use of the compost bin, and attempts to reduce rubbish (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18). As she explained:

> I suppose with food I’ve become more concerned with buying locally where I can... Perhaps it’s made me more proactive in my composting. I think it probably has actually... I mean yeah, I am now much more careful about what I’m throwing away, and I’m recycling a lot more. The bin bag is hardly full of rubbish at all really. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18)

This participant noted no change in her attitudes to sustainability, having started the process as a historically engaged member. Changes to her awareness focused around the task in question: “I’ve sort of become more interested in ... wildlife friendly gardening” (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18) and she reported no changes in know-how about sustainability practices.

In summary, participants who reported incremental practice change reported multiple changes to practices that relate to sustainability. Participants reporting this type of practice outcome also experienced change in awareness of sustainability and understanding of how to practice sustainably, but limited changes to attitudes on sustainability.

6.2.1.3 Change in one practice

Eight participants experienced change in just one sustainability practice through involvement in their community-based organisation. These changes all affected practices that were strongly targeted by the organisation in question. Participants reporting one change in practice reported only minor changes to discursive consciousness elements.

HT2 experienced a fairly substantial ‘single’ practice change in relation to shopping for Fair Trade goods after a conversation with the stallholder of a Fair Trade stall in church (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2).

> cause [stallholder] told me ‘Oh I buy Christmas presents for my god children here’ and I thought, I could do that as well. So that’s where it started. And that started me thinking more about fair trade things and then the more I looked into it for this school project it’s just sort of roller-coastered from there. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)
HT2 attributed her change in practice to this conversation, which prompted further exploration of the issue in her professional life (as a teacher) and a subsequent reshaping of shopping habits regarding fair trade goods, such that where fair trade was available she always bought it. The two unengaged participants at Holy Trinity both made smaller practice changes as a result of the CEG’s activities (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 3 and 9). These participants named small steps they had taken towards pro-environmental behaviour: buying fair-trade and organic products in church (HT3) and in the supermarket (HT9).

Well I mean you become more aware in the supermarket, looking for fair trade things. I did start buying organic milk but the supermarket didn’t always have it in. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9)

Three of the Meanwood School participants modified their travel to school towards more sustainable forms when their children joined the walking bus, the fourth was already walking to school (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 1, 3 and 4). Again, this represents a relatively small life-change. In the Green Gym projects, the Wakefield participants reported some small practice changes include one respondent growing vegetables at home and using a composter since joining the Green Gym (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 13). Another participant reported following the practitioners tips on reusing pots to grow plants in (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1). The Women’s Institute member that reported a single change, was a historically engaged participant who reduced her waste production during the Ecoteams process:

I have noticed actually whilst we’ve been measuring... we have tried very hard to re-use waste whenever we can and so the household waste has gone down a little so, you know, great sense of achievement when you measure it and it’s actually gone down over the last fortnight (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 8)

Four of the participants that changed just one practice reported no change in discursive consciousness elements as a result of involvement. These were all participants that came into the unengaged category. HT3, for instance, reported no change to attitudes or awareness through the activities of the Christian Ecstasy Group, despite taking on some behavioural changes. She was a rather passive participant who took on changes because ‘you tend to … take what’s provided’ rather than through any particular change in understanding or values (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 3). The Meanwood School participants that only made one change also reported no change of attitudes or awareness on sustainability: given that their activity did not require them to engage with sustainability this is not surprising (see 4.2).

Other participants that made one change in practice did note minor changes in awareness but no changes in attitudes. HT9 learned about Fair Trade fashion at the Holy Trinity Fashion
Show (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9), for instance, and WI8 learned more about the local network of groups interested in environmental issues: “we were put in touch with the Swap Shop which we hadn’t had any contact with” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 8).

In summary then, these participants reported only one change in practice and only minor change in discursive consciousness elements (attitudes, know-how, awareness).

### 6.2.1.4 Change in discursive consciousness

Eight participants only reported changes in discursive consciousness rather than changes in actual practice. This included mainly minor changes to attitudes, awareness, or know-how on sustainability or sustainability practice issues.

One Holy Trinity respondent with a history of sustainability practice, reported an intensification of previously held values, in particular finding himself more irritated by the status quo (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1). As he put it:

> I suddenly find myself even more annoyed about sort of litter and stuff like that, and damage to the environment. The fact that people leave cars running, and the fact that people use cars unnecessarily, that sort of thing... (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

Some minor attitudinal changes were also reported by Green Gym participants. One member with an ongoing interest in food related to her vegetable garden, for instance, found her attitudes on transporting food to eat strengthened by involvement in the Green Gym (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15). Another Green Gym member of the unengaged and suspicious type reported being less likely to be scared of various aspects of the natural world since joining the group (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 5):

> Well I used to be very frightened of bees and wasps but I’m not as frightened any more because I know that bees won’t hurt me. Because bees are quite nice and friendly actually when they want to be. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 5)

Any changes in awareness here were also relatively minor. One respondent learned more about Fair Trade fashion, since despite her being historically engaged: “the area that I wasn’t so aware of is the clothing one” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 5). Another participant noted that the church provides a forum for discussion and learning on sustainability issues: “It’s an opportunity to discuss with other people the issues, and learn a bit about them” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 7). At the Green Gym one participant reported a clearer understanding of what is the ‘right’ thing to do since attending the Green Gym (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 2).
Well you’ve got to recycle more stuff. You’ve got to look after your lightbulbs and everything like in the house… Sort of look after your electricity and look after your gas… I knew it before but I’ve sort of like been listening to it now. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 2)

Other Green Gym members reported a change in know-how through involvement in the group. GG11 learned some techniques for gardening such as composting and companion planting through involvement in the group (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 11). GG13 also learned about how to compost: “I’ve learned a bit about composting… how to go on with it. And what you’ve to do and stuff” (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 13).

### 6.2.1.5 No practice change

Eleven participants reported no change in practice or discursive consciousness through being involved in community-based organisation activities on sustainability. The participants that reported no practice change were prompted to ensure that they had understood the question. Most responses were therefore brief (a simple ‘no’) which explains why the discussion on this set of participants is rather limited.

Many (7/12) of these participants were members of the Green Gym in Wakefield. Some of those in the Green Gym that explicitly reported no changes in practice were also the participants that did not notice any connections between Green Gym activity and environmental issues (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 3, 6, 8, 9) or were not particularly interested in gardening and were attending for social reasons (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9). For instance, one participant had not noticed any attempts made by the practitioner to introduce environmental issues.

LM: What about – sometimes people have chats about environmental things… do you notice that?

GG9: I don’t notice it love no.

LM: Recycling that sort of thing?

GG9: no.

Some of the respondents with learning difficulties from the Green Gym in Wakefield had little control over their own sustainability practices as other people in their lives made shopping decisions (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 12 for instance).

Three of the other people who reported no practice or discursive consciousness change came from the historically engaged category. This includes one member of the Green Gym and two members at Bollington (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 7; Bollington Carbon Revolution
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

Participants, 2008, 4 and 5). A Holy Trinity member who was categorised as having a complementary ethos also reported no change (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6). This could be expected since these people by definition already hold some sustainability practices. One of the Holy Trinity participants that was categorised as having sustainability values was also unaffected (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 4).

6.2.2 Comparative outcome data

Alongside this qualitative assessment of practice change, participants were asked to answer a series of quantitative questions on their sustainability practices in the structured part of their interview. In order to provide a comparison point with the general population the participants were asked a series of questions from the Defra Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and the Environment, 2001 (Defra, 2001). These questions were only answered by 26 of the 45 respondents, with most of the Wakefield Green Gym participants excluded, as well as the Meanwood School participants (see 3.4.2 for clarification on this). As such, it is difficult to comment on the representativeness of this data with relation to my study, apart from to say that they only show a partial picture of the study respondents.

These data are also rather problematic when used as evidence of ‘outcomes’ of the projects under study. In fact, the results do not tell us about causation as it is unclear whether membership of a community project on sustainability caused the practice or whether those that already have sustainability practice are more likely to join a community project on sustainability. In addition, the exclusion of most of the Wakefield Green Gym participants means that most of the members that answered this question were already engaged in some way at the start of the project. As such, I would expect this data set to show more engagement in pro-environmental behaviours than the general population. Another issue with the data that was noticed in collection was that people seemed to be actively seeking to choose the ‘on a regular basis’ response as much as possible (this was the most positive of three responses, the others being ‘once or on a few occasions’ and ‘no’). In other words, at interview people looked satisfied when they were able to say ‘I do this on a regular basis’. This may be due to the placing of the quantitative data collection after a long qualitative discussion of sustainability practice.

Despite all these caveats, there are considerable differences between respondents in this study and the general population as sampled by Defra. A summary of the data is shown in Table 6.2, which lists the percentage of respondents who claim to undertake the practice on a regular basis for Defra and for this study. There are noticeable differences in the responses here, with the average number of respondents claiming to undertake behaviour regularly (in response to the 14 questions asked) being 31% in the Defra study and 73% in this study respectively. Due to the
issues with data collection above, the only tentative conclusion we can take from these differences is that this quantitative data broadly backs up qualitative results on practice change, in that there seems to be a genuine difference between the sample interviewed in my study who had experienced an intervention by community-based organisations on sustainability practice, and the general public.

Table 6.2 Percentage comparison of respondents undertaking the listed practice on a regular basis in this study, and in the equivalent study by Defra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Defra respondents %</th>
<th>This study’s respondents %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>n=3,737</strong></td>
<td><strong>n=26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberately used public transport, walked or cycled instead of a car</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut down the use of a car for short journeys (e.g. to school, work,</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local shop etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken glass to a bottle bank or separated glass from rubbish so it</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could be collected for recycling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made compost out of kitchen waste</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut down the amount of electricity/gas your household uses</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken cans to a can-bank or separated cans from rubbish so that they</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could be collected for recycling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut down on use of water</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken paper to a paper-bank or separated paper from rubbish so that</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it could be collected for recycling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done things to encourage wildlife in your garden</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken plastic to a recycling facility or separated plastic from</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubbish so that it could be collected for recycling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought toilet rolls or kitchen towels made from recycled paper</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decided not to buy a particular product because it seemed to have</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too much packaging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought organically produced food</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used low energy light bulbs in the home</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.3 Secondary outcome data

For some of the cases, detailed secondary data on behaviour change was gathered by parent or connected organisations which provides a useful means of verifying the primary data
presented above. Such data is available for Meanwood School and the Women’s Institute case studies, and is presented in turn below.

### 6.2.3.1 Meanwood School

Leeds City Council has taken detailed measurements of the travel behaviour of Meanwood School children by running yearly surveys on how children get to school. In this survey children are asked to indicate how they got to school by circling a picture of their travel mode. This form of data collection can be biased by the weather on the day in question, as more children are likely to walk and cycle on a sunny day. These data are presented in Table 6.3. They show that car use was reduced by 17.6%, and walking increased by 15.7%, in the year following the instigation of the walking bus (Leeds City Council, 2004; Leeds City Council, 2005).

#### Table 6.3 Children’s modes of travel to Meanwood School before and after the introduction of the walking bus (Leeds City Council, 2004; Leeds City Council, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Walk</th>
<th>% Car</th>
<th>% Bus</th>
<th>% Bike</th>
<th>% Other</th>
<th>No. Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage change</td>
<td>+15.7</td>
<td>-17.6</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.2.3.2 Women’s Institute

The National Federation of Women’s Institutes (NFWI) were required to do an evaluation as part of their funding for the Ecoteams project (National Federation of Women’s Institutes, 2008). This evaluation involved collecting data from 257 Women’s Institute members that participated in Ecoteams on their waste production, and water, gas and electricity use. While this data is self reported, it is also very precise, as it consists of weights and meter readings for the different factors listed. The data was collected at the beginning of the project and at every monthly meeting thereafter, thus tracking any changes that took place. The data from the NFWI is shown in Table 6.4.

The data show some reduction in all resource use and waste across the membership involved in the Ecoteams project. In addition, there is a noticeable difference between the ‘before’ measurements of the Women’s Institute members on this scheme and the national average, with lower electricity use and waste production. These data show that Women’s Institute Ecoteam members are already acting more pro-environmentally than the general population, as well as able to make further improvements when encouraged to do so through the
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Ecoteams scheme. The data shown here backs up the qualitative categorisation of many of the members of the Women’s Institute as having a ‘complementary ethos’ which results in them already holding some sustainability practices. Note that given that this data refers to members of Ecoteams, being in the Women’s Institute in itself is not necessarily an indication of a lower environmental impact.

Table 6.4 National Federation of Women’s Institute data on members’ resource use and waste production before and after the Ecoteams programme in comparison with national averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>National Average*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>2.91 kg/week</td>
<td>2.27 kg/week</td>
<td>8.17 kg/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>350 kwH/month</td>
<td>341 kwH/month</td>
<td>375 kwH/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating energy</td>
<td>1783 kwH/month</td>
<td>1416 kwH/month</td>
<td>Not given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>1854 litres/week</td>
<td>1587 litres/week</td>
<td>Not given</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*national average figures are from Global Action Plan

6.2.4 Secondary sustainability outcomes

Alongside the immediate effects on participants, the primary qualitative interviews brought out some important secondary effects in other areas of community sustainability which need documenting here. In the interviews several participants discussed how the changes they had experienced in the context under study had motivated them to take action elsewhere. The changes people instigated included attempts to persuade and inform family and friends (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6; Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16; Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 2, 4 and 5). As one of the Women’s Institute practitioners recounts:

One of the members ... she was telling me about her husband really taking it on board ... she said ‘oh you know we still talk about what we’re doing ... my husband’s marvellous, you know he checks things ... because of the difference [it makes]’… (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006)

A Green Gym member taught members of her running club to recognise Himalayan Balsam, and persuaded them to pull plants out of the ground on group runs (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16). Members also took inspiration from one community organisation to another (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2 and 5; Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 5). HT2, for instance, took her newfound enthusiasm for fair trade nurtured by the Christian Ecology Group and developed a fair trade week project in her role as a primary school teacher. She intends to repeat the week on a regular basis.
Another secondary outcome that was not formally measured by this project, but that was certainly observed in attending the Green Gym activities, was the effect of the Green Gym groups on their local environment. This was not part of the scope of the study but it is worth mentioning that Wakefield Green Gym members turned two allotments and one patch of derelict land into usable vegetable gardens. Reddish Vale members had an important impact on the condition of the Reddish Vale Country Park in their conservation work.

Bollington Carbon Revolution has taken a rather strategic approach to its activities, and in doing so has made alliances with various other stakeholder groups around the town, which the group is beginning to influence with ideas on sustainability. In particular their involvement in the revised town plan, has led to an increase in environmental items on the recommendations for action (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 4). The potential impact of this involvement is not yet measurable, but it certainly shows a shift in priorities within the town.

6.2.5 Analysis: the causes of sustainability practice outcomes

So through the qualitative analysis of outcomes for participants in the case studies undertaken for this thesis, and the comparative and secondary quantitative data, it is clear that these projects have a range of impacts on the participants’ sustainability practices. In this analysis I establish what factors have an impact on the participants taking on different intensities of sustainability practice change. I begin by discussing the impact of a participant’s history of sustainability practice on outcomes, and then continue to compare outcomes between cases, and in relation to the nature of a participant’s involvement in the community-based organisation. I find that each of these elements seems to have an effect on the sustainability practice outcomes that a participant reports.

Before I analyse the results in more detail it is worth reminding the reader that the literature to date in this area had claimed that these initiatives were able to change practice, attitudes and understanding with relation to sustainability (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002; Staats et al., 2004). This literature gave conflicting indications of the level of change that these projects can bring (Church and Elster, 2002). Equally there was lack of clarity on the causal links between positive sustainability outcomes, and contextual factors: it was not clear what it was about these projects that caused change (see discussion in 2.4.4). In addition, there was some confusion about whether measured outcomes were genuine or not, given that pro-environmental attitudes and awareness were listed as contextual features of the participants in the literature (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002).

The participant’s sustainability practice before they joined community-based initiatives is not a simple predictor of how they will react to those interventions. The extent of the
individual’s engagement as they enter the project, however, did affect what new practices are left to take on. As such, the participant’s history of engagement did not determine whether they would take action or not, however it did indicate what type of action they might take. A summary of the environmental outcomes that participant types experienced is shown in Table 6.5. This requires a more detailed explanation of how each of the different participant types experience environmental change through being involved in these projects using evidence from qualitative data.

Table 6.5 Summary of sustainability practice outcome types by participant history of sustainability practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant type</th>
<th>Outcome types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historically Engaged</td>
<td>Incremental change (HT8, HT10, GG18, BC1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in one practice (WI8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (HT1, HT5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change (GG7, BC4, BC5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently Engaged</td>
<td>Incremental change (BC2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in one practice (HT2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (HT7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary Ethos</td>
<td>Incremental change (WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in one practice (WI8, GG1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (GG11, GG15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change (HT6, GG12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Values</td>
<td>Incremental change (BC3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change (HT4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unengaged and Suspicious</td>
<td>Substantial practice change (GG16, GG17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in one practice (MS1, MS3, MS4, HT3, HT9, GG13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (GG2, GG5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change (MS2, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG8, GG9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first comment on Table 6.5 then, is that outcome types were roughly evenly distributed across the different participant types. Immediately then, we can see that the suggestion in the literature that initial pro-environmental attitude and awareness is required for participants to experience practice change is incorrect (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002). Indeed, members with no history of sustainability practice (the unengaged) can experience a variety of change types as a result of this kind of intervention. A few peculiarities stand out here. The nature of the historically engaged type is that individuals in this group were already engaged
with sustainability practices. As such, the scope for change was less than for other participant types. The same could be said for the recently engaged and complementary ethos types given that participants of this type already held sustainability practices. It is surprising to see that many participants of these types still reported change. The effects are most marked here for the Women’s Institute members who belonged to a highly unified group with members coming from a similar perspective (see 4.5). Neither historically engaged, recently engaged or complementary ethos participant types were likely to experience substantial change, however, given that they already held some sustainability practices. As such, incremental change was the most these categories were likely to be able to achieve. As a theoretical category, the sustainability values type showed potential to become engaged in sustainability practices, and that was indeed the case for one of the two participants in this category. For the unengaged and unengaged and suspicious, there was substantial room for learning about sustainability practices, given their rather limited understanding of these matters as they enter the projects. Participants in these latter three categories were likely to be able to experience all forms of change given that they have limited existing sustainability practices. It is interesting that none of the unengaged participants reported incremental change. This may be related to the fact that the instances of the Ecoteams programme that were run in the cases I studied (used in the Women’s Institute and Bollington cases and a common promoter of incremental change) had not attracted unengaged participants. Such participants may be more difficult to attract to programmes which explicitly aim to change practice in the way that Ecoteams does.

Given that different participant types experienced different outcome types, it is clear that the projects under study affected participants with different histories in different ways. This was not explicitly recognised in the groups under study. Although some groups were beginning to distinguish between types of people (Bollington practitioners, for instance, have considered the difference between council estate dwellers and themselves as middle-class professionals) this was not widespread, and there were often underlying assumptions about the effects that groups can have on their membership which showed a concern with the unengaged above other participant types. A few examples from practitioner interviews follow:

We’ve got to make it easy for people. I think people within organizations or groups are quite motivated anyway. My other concern is how we get it to those wider people who get on with their lives and don’t see any need to… (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006)

Although I am very negative about things, I think it is useful to look back over what you have achieved because then that does give you say… ‘oh yeah we did have that conference, yeah, we did do that’, that’s quite positive really. I think
it’s because I don’t feel it’s through the whole organisation, but then maybe it’s the same everywhere. (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006)

The first quote from the Women’s Institute practitioner shows evidence of a tendency to worry about the people who do not currently engage with environmental or ethical issues. The assumption was that those that are already engaged in sustainability practice need no additional attention, despite the evidence above that shows progress can still be made with those types. The focus on the currently unengaged indeed sometimes distracted from any progress groups have made with other participant types (particularly evident in the second quote above). In addition, the concern with non-members was unhelpful, as these are people that could not easily be targeted by community-based organisations. The second quote from the Christian Ecology Group practitioner expresses a similar concern with the extent to which their environmental work has permeated the organisation. The Holy Trinity practitioners framed success as a positive culture permeating the whole organisation. This was a rather destructive position because it both undermined the changes they had achieved in their work, and was probably unrealistic given the levels of opposition they had experienced within the church. A clearer understanding of participant types, and activities that can target those types would lead to a more realistic strategy for community-based organisations working on sustainability.

Table 6.6 Summary of sustainability practice outcome types by case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>Outcome types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substantial change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>MS1, MS3, MS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>HT2, HT3, HT9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>GG1, GG13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington Carbon Revolution</td>
<td>BC1, BC2, BC3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is also useful to compare the sustainability practice outcomes by case study. There were substantial differences between cases here, both in the distribution of participant types in the first place, and in the effects that their projects had on participants. It is notable that the Women’s Institute and Meanwood School projects had very narrow distributions of participant types, and both had similar effects on all or most participants involved. Holy Trinity and Green Gym cases had a wider variety of member types and a wider spectrum of effects. Table 6.6 shows the different outcome types affecting participants by case study.

Looking at outcomes by case study offers a way to understand why some participants reported change in practice and why others did not. In work on participant involvement in each community-based organisation in Chapter 5, I found that members participated in the groups under study in different ways and activities run by groups were different (see 5.3.2 for a full explanation). Some participants were members of groups that explicitly targeted sustainability practices of their members (e.g. Holy Trinity, Women’s Institute, Bollington), in other groups membership involved an activity which in itself was a sustainability practice (e.g. Meanwood School, Green Gym). In terms of participant involvement, some of the groups required regular and involved attendance (e.g. Meanwood School, Green Gym, Women’s Institute, Bollington Ecoteams) and others allowed for people to drop in and out of activities (e.g. Holy Trinity, rest of Bollington activities). Table 6.7 shows a comparison of sustainability practice outcome types by this combination of activities run by the community-based organisation and the nature of participant involvement.

Table 6.7 Summary of sustainability practice outcome types by the activities run by the community-based organisation and the nature of participant involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of participant involvement</th>
<th>Outcome types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively involved: sustainability-practice driven</td>
<td>Incremental change (HT8, HT10, WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI6, WI7, BC1, BC2, BC3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in one practice (W18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (HT1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively involved: sustainability-activity driven</td>
<td>Substantial practice change (GG16, GG17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incremental change (GG18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in one practice (MS1, MS3, MS4, GG1, GG13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (GG2, GG5, GG11, GG15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change (MS2, GG3, GG4, GG6, GG7, GG8, GG9, GG12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripherally involved</td>
<td>Change in one practice (HT2, HT3, HT9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness (HT5, HT7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change (HT4, HT6, BC4, BC5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: Outcomes

There are some patterns in Table 6.7 that deserve comment. In particular of those participants that were actively involved in sustainability-practice driven projects, all report some kind of change, mostly incremental practice change (12/14). On the other hand, of those actively involved in sustainability-activity driven projects, reported changes range from substantial practice change to no change at all. Most of these participants (12/20) reported no change or only discursive consciousness changes, although this category also holds the two participants in the Green Gym that experienced substantial change. The final category here includes participants that were peripherally involved, and most here reported no change, or only discursive consciousness changes (6/9). None of the peripherally involved participants reported substantial practice change. These findings, therefore, suggest that active involvement is a prerequisite for sustainability practice change outcomes. In addition, they suggest that such outcomes are more likely to come out of projects which target sustainability practice directly. This issue of how directly the activity targets the participants’ sustainability practice is not covered in the literature (see 2.4.1). Staats et al do note that in their study of the Ecoteams programme, the ‘socially engaged’ participants are more likely to make changes than those who are not, a finding that echoes my results on active and peripheral participants (Staats et al., 2004).

An additional element needs commenting on here, which arises in relation to the two participants that experienced substantial practice change. The most striking case for me here is indeed that of the Green Gym, which consisted of Reddish Vale and Wakefield components. Here, the Reddish Vale group (members GG16-18) reported high levels of practice change, while the Wakefield group reported relatively low levels of practice change (GG1-15 see row 3 of Table 6.6). In addition, from the discussion of community context in Chapter 4 we know that the experience of being involved in these two groups was very different (see 4.7.2). The Reddish Vale group referred to itself as ‘the family’ and members reported a strong bond between participants. Wakefield Green Gym, on the other hand, was a group which many participants attended for social reasons, and where most of the decisions and control of the group was held by the practitioner (given participants’ limited capacities for group leadership). Other groups also bore a resemblance to the Reddish Vale group: in particular the highly unified Women’s Institute groups, where people enjoyed themselves among ‘like-minded’ people. While this argument is difficult to prove with a small sample, the success of the Reddish Vale and Women’s Institute groups, where 10/11 members experienced incremental or substantial change, is likely to be connected to their cohesiveness. Again cohesiveness was a contextual factor that
was raised in the literature as a likely stimulus for practice change (Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Luckin and Sharp, 2005).

In summary then, community projects on sustainability have a variety of effects on the sustainability practices of participants. In the first part of this chapter I catalogued the different types of sustainability practice outcome using results from qualitative data. This qualitative data was backed up by quantitative comparative data and secondary data provided by the cases themselves, both of which catalogued substantial change in sustainability practices and/or a considerable difference between my sample and the general population. In the analysis I showed that where change occurred, the quality of the change was different between types of participant, given their history of sustainability practices. In addition, the nature of a participant’s involvement in the community-based organisation in question, and the nature of the activities in that organisation had an impact on the outcomes that people report (how active, and whether the activity targets sustainability-practice directly or not). Finally, the participants that reported substantial changes belonged to the most cohesive groups under study. There may be a causal link between the cohesiveness of a group, and the level of outcomes experienced. These causal factors are explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

6.3 Additional outcomes for participants

Most models of behavioural change concerned with environment do not take into account outcomes outside the environmental ones (Jackson, 2005). It is important to note that many of these additional outcomes (social, community-building, personal development, health) are given as reasons for volunteering in the more general volunteering literature and, as such, were thought to be rather important to the sustainability of these projects (Bussell and Forbes, 2002). In addition, there is evidence for some important additional outcomes of community sustainability projects in the literature, where the following additional outcomes for individuals are observed: increased skills, confidence and self-worth (Maiteny, 2002; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Howard et al., 2005), improved physical and mental health (Howard et al., 2005; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006), and active engagement in sustainability issues, resulting in increased efficacy in democratic participation, and increased likelihood of political engagement (Stock and Barnett, 1998; Hobson, 2001; Robbins and Rowe, 2002). The literature recognises that community-based projects on sustainability could have a major potential benefit, in strengthening social connections within the community-based organisation concerned, and in the local community, as well as increased community spirit (Environ, 1996; Macgillivray and Walker, 2000; Church and Elster, 2002).
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Data discussed here are taken from qualitative interviews, where additional outcomes were explored in detail with participants. This corresponds to one specific question in the interview protocol: ‘Did [the activity] have any other effects on your life?’ which also included a series of prompts based on the evidence from the literature above (e.g. did it have any affects on your social life, did you learn any new skills etc.). I begin the discussion of additional outcomes by discussing each type of additional outcome in turn. I then analyse the additional outcomes, by commenting on the levels of outcomes experienced by participants, and establishing whether there is a connection between sustainability practice outcomes and additional outcomes.

6.3.1 Tangible benefits for the individual

Some of the activities run by community-based organisations offer tangible personal benefits to the individuals involved. These were very much project-specific, but seemed to be the reason that some individuals were involved in a community project on sustainability, and, as such, are important.

For the Meanwood School walking bus, the main benefit to parents was to save time in a busy morning. Two of the parents that volunteered on the walking bus and worked part time, gained considerable time on working days by dropping off their children to the bus stop instead of to school, and it is likely that other parents were taking advantage of the bus for similar reasons (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2 and 3). As one participant explained:

I only do it three days because I work the other two, so I can drop them off on the walking bus which is brilliant. I get to work earlier, which is also a big bonus from the walking bus I think, which is why a lot of people use it.
(Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2)

This also allowed another participant (MS3) to avoid paying for pre-school care for her children in the gap between her leaving for work and the children going to school, thus saving her money.

For Green Gym members in Wakefield, the activity was a tangible benefit, in that it gave them something to do in the week (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15). None of the participants in Wakefield were in employment, and many participated in no other regular activities. Participants were certainly not seeking to spend the week at home alone and, as such, could see real benefits in the volunteering at the Green Gym. Some examples of the role of the Green Gym in participant’s lives follow:

Well he started first and he said I should be doing stuff with my life and everything so I just got involved. (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 2 in reference to her boyfriend)
It passes an hour on a morning. (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 6)

I’m staying in the gym alright! It’s boring with nothing to do in’t it. (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 14)

I think everybody should have a hobby of some sort. Because as you get older if you don’t have some interests what do you do? Sit at home and watch daytime television. (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 15)

The main undercurrent here was that the Green Gym is at least ‘something’ to do in life, and reduced the amount of time with ‘nothing to do’. While this may seem like a rather underwhelming outcome, it was highly significant for many participants, including for instance GG2, a lively young woman with learning difficulties in her 20s who had no great interest in gardening but had no other work or voluntary activities to attend (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 2).

Given that Women’s Institute and Bollington members were actively trying to reduce their consumption of electricity and gas, they could have been expected to make financial savings through being involved in Ecoteams. Several of the Women’s Institute and Bollington members interviewed did notice a slight reduction in their costs due to reduced use of electricity and gas (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1, 2, 4 and 5; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2 and 3). This did not seem to be a main consideration for members in joining the groups however.

### 6.3.2 Social benefits

The social benefits that participants drew from involvement in community activities varied considerably from case to case, given the nature of the community-based organisations involved. Some of these organisations consisted of existing social networks, and, as such, new activities did not make a great deal of difference to participants’ social world, merely strengthening existing links rather than creating new ones (Women’s Institute). As one Women’s Institute member put it: “I knew them with going to the WI but I think we became a closer group because of the time we spent together” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3). Parents at Meanwood School also reported limited social gains from the walking bus. As one participant said: “to be honest, you get on it and you go... there’s not much social interaction because you’re busy getting the kids to school really” (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 3). Most participants indeed found it difficult to talk to children or other parents while on the bus given that they were busy keeping control of the group, and ensuring road safety (Meanwood School Participants, 2005). On the other hand, Holy Trinity, Green Gyms and Bollington offered more substantial social benefits to their participants.
At Holy Trinity, social gains were noted by the members more centrally involved in the group including the group practitioners. HT1, who was a relatively recent member of the church, built relationships with a new set of people that have similar interests in environmental and ethical issues. As he put it: “People that I knew vaguely I now can sort of phone up and talk to.” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1). Both HT1 and HT10 also got to know the leaders of the Christian Ecology Group better through their activities, to positive effect. HT1 again:

They are good people. There is a lovely sense of fellowship if you like. The fact that people are concerned, that people are worried about things whereas when you go in the pub people’s main concern is ‘you can get it cheaper’ or ‘get it in Morrisons’, ‘buy one get one free’… and so it’s refreshing to actually be able to get away from that. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

HT1 evidently benefitted from being in a group with like-minded people who had a similar world view. The Christian Ecology Group practitioners also drew considerable strength from each other in their work as a team at the church. One of the clear outcomes for the leaders of the Christian Ecology Group was a strong bond between the three practitioners which had arisen out of the difficulties they have experienced over the years. These positive social effects were only experienced by members who are actively involved in the group. HT8 was an exception here: she saw herself as someone who is not particularly sociable and, as such, did not feel she had gained socially from the group (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8). None of the peripherally involved participants at Holy Trinity reported social gains (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9).

At the Green Gym, many respondents reported significant social gains from attending. These included opportunities to meet new people (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1, 3, 4). Some enjoyed the possibility of meeting different types of people. GG15, who is in her 70s, for instance liked the company of younger people, as she says: “I don’t want to join a group that’s for ‘old people’” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15). GG16 also found herself meeting people that she would not usually meet:

What I found was really interesting was that people will come to Green Gym from all walks of life... that I would probably never come across in a million years... in my own life. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

GG17 originally valued the Green Gym because it allowed her to meet people outside of her work life (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17). Others valued the opportunity to meet similar people, and GG1, for instance, benefitted from meeting other people with disabilities: “it’s normally hard to meet other disabled people” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1). Many respondents reported making new friends through the Green Gym (Green Gym Participant,
2006, 11, 14, 15; Green Gym Participant, 2007, 17, 18) and one member even found a new partner at the Green Gym in Reddish Vale.

The social bonds between members seemed particularly intense at Reddish Vale, where members referred to their group as ‘the family’ a supportive network that helps its members through times of trouble, or with any small needs both inside and outside of the gym activities. The practitioner for this group gave an illustrative example:

“We always kind of looked after one another you know… if any of the girls needed anything and the lads could do it they would help. One of the girls that should be here today, somebody’s pinched the lead off her roof so I went round last week and I’ve sorted the job.” (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)

Members gave various reasons for the social outcomes they experienced in the Green Gym. Members in Wakefield found the group friendly and fun (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 8 and 11). In Reddish Vale members noted the support in place from other members and the leaders of activities (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 18), as well as the Green Gym being a relaxed and informal environment in which members could participate socially as much or as little as they wanted (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 16).

In the Bollington case study, those respondents involved with the Ecoteam specifically noted the social gains that this activity provided. Given that these respondents were not regular volunteers, and one of them was new to the town (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1) they were more likely to experience an increase of connection to community. Some comments from participants and practitioners follow:

we’d only moved into Bollington in July of last year so it, it’s helped me get to know more people in Bollington (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

the other reason I quite enjoyed doing this was that it enabled me to make friends in the village so you know outside my normal friendship circle so… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

[I find] a certain sort of acceptance within the community a sense of … belonging or acceptability in the community for what you are doing (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

Note from the above that as well as making new friends and getting to know people, involvement in the group gave a ‘sense of belonging’ to the broader community to one of the practitioners. This is perhaps particularly important for those in organising roles, as they became known around the town as a person who is active within Bollington on these issues.
6.3.3 Personal development and learning

The Holy Trinity, Green Gym and Bollington projects all offered opportunities for personal development and or (non-environmental) learning. Again, the kind of personal development that occurred varied substantially according to the nature of each community-based organisation, its members and its activities.

At Holy Trinity, HT1 identifies spiritual and intellectual development as one of the most important outcomes of the Christian Ecology Group’s work for him. Through his new contacts with Christian Ecology Group members and other Christian Ecologists HT1 has developed his thinking. As he puts it:

I think the more I’ve thought about it and the more I’ve gone back to worshipping… I’m more concerned about … the idea of everything being connected, nature and all that sort of stuff. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

HT1 was an active volunteer in the church and had particular needs from the experience, with a degree level education, in his fifties and working in a job which did not offer him mental stimulation. He used church volunteering to provide that stimulation, and to develop his ideas. In his words: “at least I get a chance to use my brain, which I never do [at work]… It gets frustrating at times.” He would have preferred to be working in a more stimulating job, but in the meantime he used the church as a means of finding contact with interesting ideas and people.

Many members mentioned learning about gardening as an important outcome of membership of the Green Gym (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1, 2, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14; Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 17, 18). As one member put it: “No matter how much gardening you’ve done, how long you’ve been doing it for, you are always learning it over and over again” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1). Members learned different things according to their physical and learning abilities, for instance two young volunteers learned basic construction skills around the gardens (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 11, 12). One female volunteer relished learning how to use tools in conservation work:

I found that my favourite tool is a bowsaw, it is so satisfying you know! It’s hard work but it’s satisfying. I go home and I am absolutely set up for the weekend, having had a really stressful week at work. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

Others learned practical conservation and gardening skills such as planting hedges and trees and cutting them down (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17) and how to care for plants (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 10, 14) distinguishing between plants and weeds (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 2). For those with some gardening experience the Green Gym refreshed their
memory and adds to gardening knowledge, as one participant said: “that is something you are constantly adding to” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 7). Learning intensively about tool use and conservation tasks in the Green Gym, has led one member to feel more confident about working with groups outside in her role as a teacher (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18). As she put it:

…it just gave me more confidence... about… teaching children in an outdoor environment, and making sure they had a positive learning experience as well as just feeling they could enjoy themselves in the outdoors. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18)

Four people mentioned the possibility of finding a job in a related function after working as volunteers in the Green Gym. Two had already found jobs in the area, one as a gardener (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 12), and another working for Groundwork (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 17). As the latter participant explained, her volunteering at the Green Gym led her to a new career:

GG17: I started as a volunteer, and then [the practitioner] went part time because she had another job with the National Parks and I’d mentioned that I was looking for different work and she mentioned that the post was coming up and did I want to apply. That was about six months after I started volunteering, and I loved it... actually my work has really taken off, because I now work for Groundwork... and I’m on an allotment project, allotments for health and wellbeing...

LM: so in a way it has led you into a different career area?

GG17: Yes. Oh, totally.

Another had found a more formal volunteering opportunity with Groundwork (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 18) and had attended training in horticulture having had her interest raised by the Green Gym. The fourth was hoping that the Green Gym would turn into a paid opportunity in the future:

I need to get a job out of this. At the end of the day I’m sixty next year, so it’s not that easy getting jobs. So anything I can stick on a CV to make it look better…(Green Gym Participants, 2006, 7)

There were some parallels with the Holy Trinity volunteer quoted above (HT1) and GG7 as both used the volunteering experience to fill time between potential employment. Of the people using the Green Gym for career development, two were previously unemployed (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 7 and 12) and two were using the volunteering opportunity as a means of changing career (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 17 and 18)
Other opportunities for personal development arising from the Green Gym included the possibility of one enthusiastic member getting his own allotment:

they’re trying to get me an allotment. So it’s inspired me to do that... it’s pretty difficult because it’s small allotments. But they’ve got to give so many allotments out to the public. (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 1)

The friendly social environment in Wakefield presented an opportunity for a shy member to develop his social skills “I like it yeah. Everyone’s alright yeah, I’ve got used to them … I’m a bit shy” (Green Gym Participant, 2006, 11). One member sees the Green Gym as a catalyst for a series of changes in her life which she was enabled to make because of the supportive environment at Reddish Vale (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 17). As she explains:

I feel much more in control of my life and what I am going to do with it. It’s had a huge effect on my life... The idea of the Green Gym is to improve people’s health and wellbeing, yes, but not to change people’s lives in a dramatic way. It has for me. (Green Gym Participant, 2007, 17)

Some of the more active volunteers in Bollington were involved professionally in environmental issues. The leader of the group is one of these, and she found that her voluntary work was beneficial to her in her working life. While she did not join the group explicitly for that reason, it certainly played a part in her taking the leadership role:

they were looking for a leader and I thought well actually I can get a skill here as well which I don’t get a chance to use or develop in my career. (Bollington Carbon Revolution Practitioners, 2008)

The voluntary position gave her the chance to develop professional skills, and she could see the role contributing to her employability in the future.

6.3.4 Personal wellbeing and health

This category of additional outcomes was experienced mainly by Green Gym members, as the nature of the project was to provide opportunities for mental and physical health improvement. Women’s Institute and Bollington Ecoteams participants also reported personal wellbeing gains through involvement in their projects. There were also likely to be some health improvements for Meanwood School children walking with the bus, although these were not measured explicitly. Benefits at the Green Gym in this area were widespread, with 13/18 participants reporting one or more effects. The three types of outcome discussed here are personal wellbeing and physical and mental health.
Personal wellbeing is a category of outcome related to mental health, but which includes a wider range of positive outcomes for individuals. Many respondents saw being outdoors as an important benefit of the gym (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14; Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 18) as one member put it he enjoys: “being out in the garden and that” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 12). This connected strongly with the lack of task-orientation in the gym for some, who found the activities peaceful and relaxing because of the lack of compulsion to act (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16, 17). As one member explained: “it’s like playing outside when you were children, allowing you to do it as an adult” (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16).

Having learned various gardening skills through the Green Gym, volunteers in Reddish Vale feel empowered by the experience.

I must admit in the early days I was thrilled to bits to be taught how to use tools properly. I think in my generation being a girl it wasn’t something that you got the opportunity... (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

[It] started to really make me feel more in control. Like I had something I could do other than work on a weekend. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

Members in Wakefield feel proud of the work they have done and satisfied by the development of the larger project, and their role within that:

Big projects to watch ‘em grow as they get better. That’s what I like about ‘em, it interests me in gardening as well. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1)

Well anybody that did see it first and that sees it now really they wouldn’t believe... (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15)

Women’s Institute and Bollington members who were involved in Ecoteams reported that meeting together was a fun experience.

We just had a really good laugh with one another …and the social aspects of things as well, you know going out for dinners and these sorts of things…just make it fun and sort of being in one another’s homes and seeing how they live their lives made it fun to do… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

We really did have fun. We enjoyed it, we all enjoyed it. I think people sometimes think it is too serious but it can be fun as well... It may be because we all laughed a lot and had a bottle of wine with it... but...[laughs] we did enjoy it. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 2)

While this did not represent a major life change for the individuals involved, it certainly associates the activity with a positive emotional experience. The Women’s Institute participant
Members noted changes in both physical and mental health as a result of being involved in the Green Gym. Note that these health outcomes are also supported in the wider literature on Green Gyms (Reynolds, 1999; Reynolds, 2002). Physical and health behaviour changes included:

- Increased consumption of fresh vegetables (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 14)
- Walking or cycling a considerable distance to the gym activities (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 11, 12)
- Improved grip (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 14) and maintained flexibility (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 15)
- Weight loss (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 5, 15)
- Improved back and upper body fitness (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)
- Substantial increase in fitness (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

Not as many members discussed mental health openly, this may have been a reluctance to talk about this with a stranger, especially since both Practitioners noticed substantial presence of mental health issues, and related improvements through membership. As they explained:

We’ve had loads of people like that… that have come here really upset with the world. But they’ve been here 12 months, 18 months and its amazing how they come round. (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)

I’ve got another lady who comes to one of the plots who’d been recommended by an occupational therapist and she has suffered in the past from depression. Its built up her confidence hugely and she loves what she’s doing and she’s got really involved and she comes in extra days, and does extra things and its like given her a new lease of life. I’ve heard this from somebody who she knows as well, he keeps saying she’s so much better since she’s doing this. (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006)

Those that did talk about the mental health effects referred to the Green Gym as a respite from normal life and a refuge in nature. One respondent saw the Green Gym as an opportunity to step off the ‘conveyor belt’ (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16), another, talked of being outdoors being a way to cope with mental health problems: “I suffer depression… and just being outdoors you know is fantastic way of dealing with that” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 7). Another member saw the gym as a trigger for a broader improvement in mental health (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17).
6.3.5 Negative additional outcomes

Participants reported various types of frustration with both environmental living and voluntary work, as follows:

1. Frustration at the complexity of pro-environmental living;
2. Frustration at lack of infrastructure to support change;
3. Frustration at other people’s ‘bad’ practice;
4. Frustrations and stress of voluntary work.

These will be discussed in turn below. The feelings of frustration felt by participants are important because they remind us that engaging in sustainable living is still a minority activity, and one that is not always easy to achieve in a society in which the dominant culture often works against sustainability practices. In addition, voluntary activities in themselves can be very stressful, given that responsibility often falls to whoever is willing to shoulder it (see literature in 2.3.3). The participants that experienced the first three frustrations (which relate to sustainability practices) came mainly from Holy Trinity and Women’s Institute cases. It is significant that these include many historically engaged and complementary ethos participant types, who have engaged in sustainability practices for some time. The frustrations and stress of voluntary work were felt by participants in all cases.

The first of these ‘frustrations’ was with the complexity of trying to make the right decisions in a world where contradictory information on the ‘right’ thing to do is available from different sources. This was expressed in the most detail by participants who were frustrated by simplistic messages on behaviour:

It’s alright saying you can recycle bottles but, people don’t even wash them out and bung them in there. And should you take the labels off or shouldn’t you... And are the fumes that you get through a recycling project more harmful than the actual... you know... there is a whole area there that needs sorting out. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 5)

It can be hopefully recycled although there is talk of ... in general ...our country shipping it off to another place... I don’t know really (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 4)

In addition to being frustrated about the lack of information available on exactly how to go about recycling, HT5 and WI4 above had evidently heard contradictory messages on the environmental effects of plastics recycling. Knowing what is best became a real concern for participants who agonised over choices of how to act and how to spend (also apparent for Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 7 and 8; Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1).
Second, respondents were also frustrated by the lack of a supportive infrastructure to encourage environmental living. The absence of infrastructural support made participants feel bad about not being able to do the right thing.

I recycle as much as I am able. We have a blue bag for paper, which is collected once a fortnight, so I put all my paper in there. But it is quite difficult to do anything else, because the weight of carrying things to recycling bins, then sometimes you get there and they are brimming over... I don’t have transport so it is quite difficult. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9)

But there is so much packaging that comes with things that you buy from the supermarket that you can’t recycle all this plastic stuff. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

Because I’m sixty four I now have a free bus pass that will take me anywhere in the whole country. However I can’t get back because we don’t have a bus coming into the village after half past six so whilst I can go I can’t come home (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 8)

The first interviewee here was an elderly woman with serious back problems, and therefore could not make use of the facilities provided by the local council. These quotes also amounted to a frustration with the limits of what participants can personally achieve within the infrastructure available to them. Frustration with the failings and limits of infrastructural services was voiced by several other participants (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 5 and 8; Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1, 3, 6 and 7).

Third, there was some frustration experienced in relation to other people’s ‘bad’ practice. Being involved with the Christian Ecology Group made one long-term engaged participant more likely to get annoyed with other people’s ‘bad’ practice, as the issues were more often brought to mind in daily life (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1). One of the Women’s Institute members had a similar reaction:

My neighbour opposite he keeps doing it... I shall tell him one of these days ‘you can take cardboard to the tip, you don’t need to put it into your grey bin’. He’d probably think I was a busy-body. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 4)

Many of the Women’s Institute members had similar reactions to others’ shortcomings (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6). Another Holy Trinity member found herself frustrated by other people’s practice: “I’m disheartened, quite often that there aren’t as many people who take life so seriously” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6). While she maintained some hope that people will change, being different to other people does make life difficult for participants.
Fourth, there are frustrations and stress inherent in being involved in voluntary work. This was experienced differently in different cases, and several issues arose that will be discussed by case below. Many of these connect with the issue of responsibility in voluntary work that caused tension in a situation where individuals were not paid for what they do.

Involvement in Holy Trinity was found by participants and practitioners to be relatively stressful. Although not all active members reported this (notably HT1 and HT8 did not), two members (HT6 and HT10) found themselves taking on more responsibility than they had intended. This usually resulted from the reliance on voluntary help to run different activities, and the occasional shortage of help resulting from less active members failing to do their bit. As HT10 explained:

It was very hard work you know, I don’t think people appreciated how much hard work... after the fashion show [practitioner] and I spent ages sorting out. Because [another member] wasn’t very well at that time so we took on her load as well... I don’t know that I’d take on ordering the clothes again. I found that really stressful to be honest. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10)

Due to the unpredictable demands on her time, HT10 would be less likely to volunteer in the future (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10). One of the practitioners of Holy Trinity activities had also experienced considerable ill-health through stress after each major event (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006).

Green Gym Reddish Vale members experienced stress in relation to the change of status of the group, from a BTCV managed project, to one staffed entirely by volunteers. Again this connected with issues of responsibility, as individual members were reluctant to take on the responsibilities associated with running a Green Gym project. Some of the members’ reactions are given below:

I don’t want to be responsible for making sure that somebody doesn’t chop their finger off or something... (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18).

It’s difficult at the moment because we’re kind of trying to do it ourselves. It’ll never be 100% because we haven’t got a person that’s on the job 100%. It is a wing and a prayer. We rely on people like [Green Gym member] to do the photo-statting at work, or to do all sorts of stuff in works time and on works equipment and stuff like that. So... you know you just rely on people all the time (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)

But being a member of the Green Gym, not the project leader, meant you could just enjoy the spin-offs if you like, that wasn’t your main concern. In the independent group I can see that will be [different]... and that really does take the shine off it, totally for me anyway. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)
Although members were theoretically qualified to take on these responsibilities, they joined the group to enjoy the proceeds of a well organised volunteering opportunity, and found that the administrative and responsibility burdens of the organisational role overpowered the positive experiences and outcomes they reported as group members. The group has now ceased to exist as a BTCV Green Gym, and has instead set up as an independent community group with less emphasis on recruitment and paperwork. There were parallels here to the stress that Holy Trinity practitioners felt in running their group, particularly in the run up to large events. The practitioners at Holy Trinity had also considered giving up on their activities as a result of this stress (Christian Ecology Group Practitioners, 2006).

Not all groups experienced such major negative outcomes. The three groups that reported far less negative outcomes of volunteering were Wakefield Green Gym, Meanwood School and Bollington. At the Wakefield Green Gym, only one participant reported stress, in the form of a negative interaction with a youth group participant on a related scheme run by BTCV who had talked to her inappropriately (“he was being rude. Talking about private stuff.”). Because a range of people attend the schemes both in Wakefield and in Reddish Vale, specific individuals could sometimes cause problems in moments of anger or inappropriate behaviour. Such an incident was also reported by one of the Reddish Vale members (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18). Given the substantial positive social outcomes listed above, these were fairly minor occurrences and did not put individuals off remaining in the group. At Meanwood School, again only one respondent emphasised the responsibility involved in walking a large group of children to school in the morning:

I think … people on the whole are very good and they wait while you are crossing the roads etc., but you can’t always guarantee that people are always going to be so careful. (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 4)

She obviously finds this responsibility something of a strain, mainly due to the dangers inherent in the street environment. In Bollington one respondent brought up the stresses of volunteering, in his frustration at the limits to what a voluntary group can achieve, and the stresses inherent in attempting to make change with limited resources:

I’ve found it was quite depressing at times you know, we can just talk a lot in the group, we’ve really got to make sure at some point we need to think... quite carefully about all the time and effort lots of us are putting in, in terms of what effect we’re really gonna have (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)
In summary, participant experienced four types of negative change: frustration at the complexity of pro-environmental living, frustration at lack of infrastructure to support change, frustration at other people’s ‘bad’ practice, and frustrations and stress of voluntary work.

**6.3.6 Areas of no change**

Most of the additional outcomes in the literature were observed to some extent in the five cases under study. One area where very little change was observed was in increased efficacy in democratic participation, and increased likelihood of political engagement (as observed by Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Hobson, 2001; Robbins and Rowe, 2002). As political empowerment was anticipated to be a feature of these kinds of projects in the literature participants were asked about this explicitly in qualitative interviews. There were only a few responses that indicated any sort of empowerment. A member of the Meanwood School group’s perceived efficacy of campaigning on local traffic issues increased, as she believed that the walking bus made pleas for traffic calming measures in a local hotspot more likely to be heard:

> I think something is going to happen. So if something is sorted out because of the walking bus then that’ll be really good. I think that’s why they’re taking more notice of us because it’s on the walking bus route. (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2)

A member of the Women’s Institute also found herself more willing to engage:

> I think I have engaged far more with the local councillors over the facilities that are here and knowing what other councils are doing has made it more possible … to argue… (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 7)

These were the only instances of an increased sense of political efficacy, and no other members reported change. There are several potential reasons for this. Some of the projects under study were deliberately framed in an a-political way in order to avoid associating environmental issues with politics and so as to ensure inclusivity in the group (Women’s Institute, Bollington Carbon Revolution). As one of the participants at Bollington explained:

> when I … joined the group … I was very much told that it wasn’t a political group and it didn’t want to campaign or sort of try to persuade people in a political way (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

In addition, many of the projects were not particularly critical of the power structures that they contend with. For instance, while Women’s Institute members were critical of infrastructural provision (see comments on frustration with infrastructure above in 6.3.5), the
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Ecoteams programme does not particularly encourage critique, instead concentrating on positive actions by individuals.

6.3.7 Analysis: the role of additional outcomes

Section 6.3 was introduced with the idea from the literature that positive additional outcomes might have an influence on membership of community-based organisations, and willingness to take on sustainability practices. In cataloguing these additional outcomes it was clear that one case (the Green Gym) resulted in many more positive additional outcomes for participants than the others. A typology of additional outcomes experienced by participants is given in Table 6.8. This includes both benefits and negative outcomes, and categorises each participant according to the numbers of each of these that they reported.

Incidentally, in the literature on this issue a series of additional outcomes for participants were listed (see 2.4.3 for full list) including many of those discussed above (Environ, 1996; Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Macgillivray and Walker, 2000; Hobson, 2001; Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002; Michaelis, 2002; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Jackson and Michaelis, 2003; Howard et al., 2005; Alexander et al., 2007). Crucially though, the causal relationship between the additional outcomes and the membership of a community-based organisation is not clear in the existing literature.

Table 6.8 reveals some patterns of positive outcomes by case study, which were also evident from the discussion of additional outcomes above. Multiple positive additional outcomes were seen for most participants in the Green Gym cases, where both in Wakefield and Reddish Vale Green Gyms most people reported experiencing more than one additional benefit (14/18) and no-one reported no additional benefits. These ranged from personal development outcomes (gaining confidence, learning about gardening) to more community oriented changes (meeting different types of people). It makes sense that Green Gym participants should report multiple outcomes, given the wide objectives of this programme (see 4.4). Additional outcomes in the other cases were less extensive. At Meanwood School, for instance, the nature of the walking bus meant that parents did not have increased social contact with each other, as they were busy looking after a large group of children. Some tangible benefits for some individuals involved, such as saving on childcare costs, were experienced here, however (2/4 participants). At Bollington, the main additional impact was social, with several members noting increased integration in the community. This may have been enhanced by the members being new to voluntary work, and in some cases to the community. At Holy Trinity 8/10 participants reported no additional benefits. Perhaps this is related to the fact that the Christian Ecology Group’s goals were strongly focused on improving ethical and environmental engagement. In the Women’s
Institute Ecoteams, secondary benefits for individuals were also rather limited with 6/8 participants reporting only one benefit. Social impacts at both the Women’s Institute and Holy Trinity were negligible since most members already knew each other well. It could be that participants did experience other benefits but that they attribute these to church or Women’s Institute attendance more generally. This finding clarifies the situation in the literature somewhat (as raised by Environ, 1996; Macgillivray and Walker, 2000; Church and Elster, 2002), in that it makes clear that not everyone experiences positive social outcomes, and that this depends on the participants’ volunteering practice history.

Table 6.8 Typology of additional outcomes experienced by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional outcomes category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple benefits to participant</td>
<td>Participant reports multiple benefits to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>GG1, GG7, GG11, GG12, GG14, GG15, GG16, GG17, GG18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few benefits to participant (2/3)</td>
<td>Participant reports a few benefits to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>HT1, GG2, GG4, GG5, GG10, GG13, WI8, BC2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One benefit to the participant</td>
<td>Participant reports one benefit to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>HT10, MS2, MS3, GG3, GG6, GG8, GG9, WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI7, BC1, BC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No benefits noted by participants</td>
<td>Participant reports no benefits to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>MS1, MS4, HT2, HT3, HT4, HT5, HT6, HT7, HT8, HT9, WI6, BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple negative outcomes for participant (2+)</td>
<td>Participant reports multiple negative outcomes to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>HT5, HT8, GG18, WI1, WI4, WI6, WI7, HT6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One negative outcome for participant</td>
<td>Participant reports one negative outcome to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>MS4, HT9, HT10, GG16, WI3, WI5, WI8, BC1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No negative outcomes</td>
<td>Participant reports no negative outcomes to him/herself by being involved in the CBO activity</td>
<td>MS1, MS2, MS3, HT1, HT2, HT3, HT4, HT7, GG1, GG2, GG3, GG4, GG5, GG6, GG7, GG8, GG9, GG10, GG11, GG12, GG13, GG14, GG15, GG17, WI2, BC2, BC3, BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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All of the cases reported some negative additional benefits, mainly related to the stress of running and being involved in a voluntary activity, and the responsibility involved in taking on voluntary work. Such negative outcomes are not often noted in the literature (with the exception of Howard et al., 2005). In addition, most of the negative outcomes were noted by Holy Trinity and Women’s Institute participants, most of whom were active in volunteering in their own organisation and elsewhere. It may be that the fact that these participants were all regular volunteers made them more aware of the difficulties inherent in being involved in community work.

Table 6.9 Relationship between positive additional outcomes for participants and sustainability practice outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substantial change to sustainability practices</th>
<th>Multiple benefits to participant</th>
<th>A few benefits to participant (2/3)</th>
<th>One benefit to the participant</th>
<th>No benefits noted by participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GG16, GG17</td>
<td>GG18</td>
<td>BC2</td>
<td>HT10, W11, W12, W13, W14, W15, W17, BC1, BC3</td>
<td>HT8, WI6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental change to sustainability practices</td>
<td>GG1</td>
<td>WI8</td>
<td>MS3</td>
<td>MS1, MS4, HT2, HT3, HT9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to a single sustainability practice</td>
<td>GG11, GG15</td>
<td>HT1, GG2, GG5, GG13</td>
<td>HT5, HT7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change to practice, change in discursive consciousness</td>
<td>GG7, GG12</td>
<td>GG4</td>
<td>MS2, GG3, GG6, GG8, GG9</td>
<td>HT4, HT6, BC4, BC5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The multiple additional benefits experienced by participants at the Green Gym are particularly interesting in the light of the findings from the section on sustainability practice outcomes, which established that the Green Gym in Wakefield had only limited effects on its participants’ sustainability practices (6.2.5). So, to return to the proposition in the literature that there may be a link between benefits experienced by participants and the level of sustainability practice change, is that the case (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000)? Table 6.9 shows the relationships between positive additional outcomes, and sustainability practice outcomes.
outcomes as reported by participants. There is no obvious pattern here, and the table makes clear that the relationship between positive additional outcomes and environmental outcomes must be more complex than a simple trade off between the two as proposed in the literature.

What is special about the Green Gym case is that it attracts members that do not volunteer elsewhere. This suggests that there might be a relationship between additional outcomes for participants and their previous involvement in community as discussed in Chapter 5 (5.3.1). Table 6.10 and Table 6.11 show the relationship between positive outcomes and negative outcomes respectively to participants’ involvement in community work. There are some interesting patterns in the relationships between these factors. In Table 6.10, we see that very few of the participants that had limited involvement in the community before they joined the group in question experienced no benefits (2/19: I refer to the participants in the last two rows of the table here). Equally, many of this group of participants (11/19) experienced at least a few benefits through being involved in the group. Of those that were already heavily involved in community (involved in more than one group) 11/16 reported either one benefit or no benefits. It seems that experience of positive outcomes has some connection to lack of involvement in community at the start of the project. In Table 6.11, we see that most of the participants reporting negative outcomes (11/16) are those who are heavily involved in community (involved in more than one group). In contrast, only one member who was not involved in community when he joined the group in question reported negative outcomes (1/19: BC1). There is also a connection between experience of negative outcomes and previous involvement in community.

These findings are to some extent contradictory of the general literature on volunteering (see 2.3.3). Chinman and Wandersman found that the more a volunteer participates in a group, the more benefits they report experiencing (Chinman and Wandersman, 1999). The contradiction with my results here may be as a result of volunteers being asked what benefits they incur from this particular group, rather than their volunteering more generally. Chinman and Wandersman also found that volunteers reporting negative aspects are sometimes regular volunteers, and sometimes infrequently involved (ibid.). Most of the negative effects in my study were felt by regular volunteers. The rather extreme case of the Green Gym may be distorting the results somewhat in my data, given that most of the benefits and very few negative outcomes were experienced here.

In summary then, the positive additional outcomes reported by participants were more prevalent in certain cases (Green Gym) and for participants with specific volunteering profiles. Those with no current volunteering practice were more likely to experience positive benefits, those who were extensively involved in volunteering outside the activity in question were more likely to report negative impacts. There does not seem to be a relationship between sustainability
Table 6.10 Relationship between additional positive outcomes to participants and their involvement in community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in more than one group</th>
<th>Multiple benefits to participant</th>
<th>A few benefits to participant (2/3)</th>
<th>One benefit to the participant</th>
<th>No benefits noted by participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GG15, GG16, GG18</td>
<td>HT1, WI8</td>
<td>HT10, WI1, WI2, WI3, WI4, WI5, WI7</td>
<td>HT3, HT7, HT8, HT9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG15, GG16, GG18</td>
<td>MS2, MS3</td>
<td>MS1, HT2, HT5, HT6, HT9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG15, GG16, GG18</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other community involvement</td>
<td>GG1, GG7, GG11, GG12, GG14, GG17</td>
<td>GG2, GG4, GG5, GG13, BC2</td>
<td>GG3, GG6, GG8, GG9, BC1, BC3</td>
<td>BC5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11 Relationship between additional negative outcomes for participants and their involvement in community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in more than one group</th>
<th>Multiple negative outcomes for participant</th>
<th>One negative outcome for participant</th>
<th>No negative outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HT8, GG18, WI1, WI4, WI6, WI7, HT5, HT6, HT9,</td>
<td>HT10, GG16, WI3, W15, WI8</td>
<td>HT1, HT3, HT4, HT7, GG15, WI2, BC4</td>
<td>GG1, GG2, GG3, GG4, GG5, GG6, GG7, GG8, GG9, GG10, GG11, GG12, GG13, GG14, GG17, BC2, BC3, BC5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
practice outcomes and additional outcomes. These results contradict two elements of the literature. First, positive additional outcomes of these projects are not the prime motivating factor for all volunteers involved in community sustainability, and do not represent an ‘exchange of benefits’ (un-sustainable practices for social capital) for all participants given the lack of relationship between sustainability practice outcomes and additional outcomes (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). Second the relationship between participation and additional outcomes does not follow the pattern established in the volunteering literature by Chinman and Wandersman (1999).

6.4 Conclusion

In reviewing the data I have collected on outcomes to these projects, I found that participants report a range of sustainability practice outcomes, from no change to substantial practice change. The potential for change was different according to a participant’s sustainability practice history, with those with a long history of engagement unlikely to have as much room for improvement. The main factors affecting the extent of sustainability practice change for each participant, however, were the extent of each participant’s involvement in the community-based organisation in question and the nature of that involvement. The more involved someone is in a community-based organisation, and the more directly that organisation addresses sustainability practice, the more likely the participant is to take on sustainability practices. These ideas are further developed into a theory of what change occurs in the context of interventions by community-based organisations on sustainability in the discussion chapter (see 8.2).

Participants also reported extensive additional outcomes in connection with their involvement in community activities on sustainability. These include social, personal development, personal wellbeing and health benefits. In addition, some participants also reported negative outcomes (frustration and stress) in connection with taking on sustainability practices and volunteering. These additional outcomes did not seem to show a relationship with the adoption of sustainability practices. Instead they were explained by participants’ involvement in the community. Newcomers to community volunteering reported more positive outcomes, whereas serial volunteers reported more negative outcomes. Again this issue is dealt with in more detail in the discussion chapter (see 8.4).

In the following chapter on ‘mechanisms’ I will explain how participants were influenced by community-based organisations to modify their sustainability practices.
7 Mechanisms

This chapter answers the fifth research question ‘How do sustainability projects run by community-based organisations stimulate change in a participant?’ In doing so it uses the concept of ‘mechanism’ familiar in the social sciences. Mechanisms are a means of expressing causation which avoid the statement of ‘laws’ of causation by exploring what seems to trigger change at a lower level of generalisation (Elster, 1989). Pawson and Tilley define mechanisms as: “how program outputs follow from the stakeholders’ choices (reasoning) and their capacity (resources) to put these into practice” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 66).

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the way in which mechanisms were identified through data collection and analysis. I then give a summary list of the mechanisms identified, after which, I discuss each of the mechanisms in detail offering evidence for the mechanisms and explanations of how they work. Finally, I analyse the group of mechanisms as a whole and offer an assessment of the implications of an understanding of the mechanisms for groups involved in community-based sustainability projects. This analysis also links back to the literature on practice theory as the key finding here is that mechanisms all involve both agency and structure factors.

7.1 Identification of mechanisms

My focus here was on identifying the mechanisms that are in play for participants in community-based projects on sustainability. In particular, I was looking to identify the reasons that participants give for taking on sustainability practice in connection with their voluntary activities in the community. Understanding the mechanisms at play in community-based organisations adds to an understanding of how individuals are stimulated to take on more sustainable practices in this context.

Mechanisms were elicited and discussed during the participant interview process. When participants were questioned on changes to their sustainability practices, they were also asked to explain why they made or did not make changes. Participants were happy to comment on the reasons for them taking on new practices. In analysis, the mechanisms were first categorised by case, and then across the whole set of cases. The issue of ‘why changes happened’ was also raised with practitioners at interview, and their contributions are incorporated below as appropriate. Some mechanisms identified below were seen only in some cases, and/or apply only to some participant types. How each mechanism worked and to which cases and participant types they applied is explained under each mechanism description below. Mechanisms came about as a result of a specific activity run by a community-based organisation, or because of a
more general effect of the community-based organisation on the participant. This relates directly to the definition of mechanism given by Pawson and Tilley above, with the ‘capacity’ of an individual to change their practice being afforded by their history of sustainability practice, the activities and norms provided by their community-based organisations and their own engagement in change (through their ‘discursive consciousness’). All mechanisms seen in my data rely on something happening within the community-based organisation, as well as a change in the participant’s discursive consciousness, a feature which is discussed in the analysis section in relation to practice theory.

### 7.2 Mechanisms summary and description

Table 7.1 shows a summary of the mechanisms identified in the case studies that form this research project. It also lists the participants affected by each mechanism. In the following sections each of the mechanisms listed in Table 7.1 is discussed in turn, with particular reference to the exact nature of the mechanism, and the way in which it affects different participant types.

#### 7.2.1 Amplification

The mechanism of amplification occurred when participants experienced a strengthening of their sustainability practice as a result of being involved in their group’s activities. This mechanism was triggered by participants being involved in activities run by the community-based organisation, which brought their habitual practices from their practical into their discursive consciousness, and then made them more likely to change those practices. This mechanism could only apply to participants that were previously engaged in sustainability practice (historically engaged, recently engaged or complementary ethos types). It was most commonly mentioned by historically engaged and complementary ethos participant types.

Participants noted a greater focus on environmental or ethical issues since being involved in their group’s activities. By regularly attending group meetings or events, participants found that these issues become more central in their lives. As they explained:

> It just keeps you focused on it rather than just about saying ‘ah, well yes we’ll get that sorted out’, you know I think it keeps you focused on a month by month basis (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

> Somebody once said with ethical issues, we don’t realise we are making an ethical decision, and it’s keeping that in your mind that almost anything that you do has an impact on the environment in some way. Each journey you take, each purchase you make. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8)
Table 7.1 Summary of mechanisms with description and list of corresponding participants that are affected by each mechanism

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Participants are affected by leadership in three ways: The guidance and passion of local leaders inspiring change (local leadership) The perceived need for the organisation to be doing the right thing and 'leading by example' (CBO leadership) Individual members perceiving themselves as role models (individual leadership)</td>
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This greater focus stemmed from participants being triggered to think about sustainability issues more often. Actively thinking about sustainability issues was one of the reasons behind amplification, and this was something that was stimulated by membership of a community-group with interests in sustainability.

Through involvement in the activities, participants accessed new information, or were reminded of what they know, making them think carefully about, and sometimes change, their current practice. Some examples follow:

I had been aware of it… because I was a teacher... and over at the church they are very into Fair Trade and the vicar who used to come to talk to the children talked a lot about it. And, I read in the newspapers and you know … the unfairness of the poverty in the world… I was aware of that before I think… But the ecology group just kind of linked it all up (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10)

It certainly makes you stop and think before you do things. Before I get the car out, I think ‘have I got time... I could walk that in 10-15 minutes’. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

Several participants reported being sensitised to sustainability issues from other sources. This amounted to a kind of ‘spill-over’ amplification of awareness as participants were more likely to listen to messages on sustainability in the media or in social situations:

I’m thinking about it in a way I wouldn’t have done before. When it says ‘ecology’ I think ‘oh I’ll have a listen to that’ whereas normally I wouldn’t have taken any notice of it. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

Immediately you hear that on the radio the television or in the paper, you either prick your ears up or you read it when maybe you would have thought... here it goes again. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 2)

In addition, participants talked about how their instinctive responses to (or practical consciousness of) environmental or ethical issues had changed through involvement:

I was already interested but it probably has contributed to me becoming more obsessive… (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18)

I feel guilty if I chuck something in the bin rather than putting it in the proper place. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 4)

The responses here amount to an explicit linking of values and sustainability practice, with participants more determined to avoid contradictions between values on sustainability and their daily practice as a result of their membership. For the second quote here, disjunction
between practice and values led to feelings of guilt, which spurred her on to do the ‘right’ thing in future.

Women’s Institute participants experienced a specific attitudinal amplification here, which amounted to amplification of their ethos, with its emphasis on avoiding waste. This was partly to do with the importance of not wasting money, as one participant put it: “You just can’t afford to throw money down the drain. It’s as simple as that.” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3). There was a more general need to avoid waste, however, which was reinforced by membership of the Women’s Institute groups:

We are not metered, so you think ‘oh it doesn’t matter’, but yes it does matter it is still wasting it even if you pay the same amount. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 2)

Here, the participant found that her ‘waste-not’ ethos applied even though she was not saving money from reducing water use. Making explicit the link between the ‘waste-not’ ethos and sustainability, therefore, amplified members’ practices.

The stimulation of awareness and attitudes, in the ways explained above can therefore translate into amplification of practice. One participant explained the process of converting a greater focus on environment into practice:

First of all it is a conscious effort then it becomes just something you do ... I think I did make a very conscious effort to recycle anything that I could. Whereas before if I was in a hurry it might have got put in the bin. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

Note that this quotation was also used to evidence this participant’s change of practice in Chapter 6. The participant implies that because she had made such a ‘conscious effort’ the practice would now stick because it ‘becomes just something that you do’. This participant had effectively re-examined her recycling practice, made an effort to increase materials going to recycling, and then adopted this more intense practice in the long term.

In summary, the mechanism of amplification amounts to a greater attention on behalf of participants to their own sustainability practice as a result of membership of the community-based organisation. Participants were actively thinking about sustainability practice issues and as a result they were sensitised to more general discussion of sustainability. In addition, their instinctive practices with relation to sustainability were brought into the discursive consciousness. For the Women’s Institute members this also amounted to a link between their own ethos (‘waste-not’) and environmental issues.
7.2.2 Leadership

Leadership as a trigger for change manifests itself in several ways within the community-based organisations under study. There were three main themes in interviewees’ understandings of how leadership affects their attitudes and practices:

- The guidance and passion of local leaders inspiring change (local leadership)
- The perceived need for the organisation to be doing the right thing and 'leading by example' (community-based organisation leadership)
- Individual members perceiving themselves as role models (individual leadership)

The leadership mechanisms involved the community-based organisation providing leadership and setting new cultural rules for participants, who were then motivated to want to practice more sustainably. These three themes will be discussed and evidenced in turn in the following paragraphs.

The guidance and passion of local leaders as inspiration for change was a feature noted by many members in all cases apart from Meanwood School. The leaders of each group, and sometimes other active members of the groups, were often influential members of the community who were acting as role models for those taking an interest in this area. Many of the participants found local leaders inspiring.

I think the ecology group, they are a lovely set of people and they are very passionate about … all aspects of ecology… [that] really made me more determined to do what I could. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 10)

Basically because the girl that ran it was one of these people that… she was a magic person, you know what I mean, one of those people that you enjoy being with. (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)

Note that the second quotation here is also given in Chapter 6 to evidence change, and is from a practitioner who used to be a participant. In addition, many practitioners were praised for their competence. At the Green Gym in Reddish Vale for instance the practitioner “always made sure that everything was spot on” (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007). The Women’s Institute practitioner in North Lincolnshire was equally praised:

I just feel that she puts so much effort into it. She obviously had put a lot more into it before we went to her. She knew exactly what she was talking about. She is very good. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3)

And in Bollington, the professionalism of the group leader was considered to be crucial to the success of the project.
I think most probably it’s partly down to having people like [group leader] as the chair who has been involved and is really taking things on board very professionally, has had a vision as to how to go about doing it and has thought about things for us all from an early stage. (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

Note that this element of professionalism was only discussed at Bollington, where many members and practitioners were environmental or other professionals and where there was an emphasis on the importance of professionalism in their understanding of the group. Participants in other cases also emphasised the way in which practitioners approached sustainability issues, as participants from the Green Gym and Bollington explained:

It was the way it was done... they weren’t teaching old dogs new tricks and being patronising, it was saying ‘these are the things you can do and it will save you money or help the environment’ (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

The people running it … they had a very positive attitude to being able to change and they were enthusiastic about it (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

A positive and enthusiastic approach from leaders was helpful as was one that avoids over emphasis of problems related to environment. This is discussed in more detail under the mechanism of ‘Valuing small changes’ below (7.3.7).

The importance of leadership by the community-based organisation itself on environmental or ethical matters was particularly emphasised by members of Holy Trinity and Women’s Institute case studies. Both of these cases were in organisations with strong hierarchical structures (in comparison to Bollington for instance), where the nature of participant’s belonging to the organisation is more likely to be expressive (to do with expressing identity) than instrumental (to do with functional concerns) (see 2.3.1 for further detail on these terms). At Holy Trinity, members placed importance on the church setting an example, with emphasis on the potential for outreach on ethical living by the institution.

I think the church should be involved. To take a stand and let people know what is happening, and through groups like the ecology group. If the churches are taking a stand, more people will be aware of what is happening. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9)

I think the Church is there to resource you and to encourage you in what you do in your daily life. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 5)

Members, therefore, saw the function of the church as a leader which motivates, resources and encourages sustainability practices in its members. In contrast, the Women’s
Institute members were more aware of the national voice of their organisation and its impact on more powerful organisations.

It is the largest women’s organisation in the country. When we take up an issue we have made changes in the past and we will in the future. If we feel strongly enough about something it does change. We do have time with government committees and European committees. We are taken seriously. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

This national leadership had an impact on individual practice. When asked if she saw her practice changes as significant, one respondent replied: “Yeah, if a lot of people do it. The Women’s Institute is quite a big organisation, they have quite a voice I think in things.” (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1) Here, both Women’s Institute respondents saw the voice and acts of the national organisation as connected to their own individual practice: belonging to the Women’s Institute is being in a group that takes national issues seriously and that then translates these issues to individual acts.

A few participants saw themselves as leaders through involvement in the groups they joined, and through their learning on environmental issues. As one of the Women’s Institute members expressed it:

Well ok we are only a small group, I am only one single person, but if I can do something that means that I am not making a huge impact on environment then you start small. If everybody does a little bit… (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 4)

In the Holy Trinity case this also connected to the individual’s sense of the importance of ‘doing the right thing’ as a Christian. HT6 said for instance:

There is nothing worse from the church than to see a church person doing the wrong thing. So I think we must always as a church lead by example. It breaks my heart when you hear about vicars or anybody having affairs with parishioners. We really shouldn’t let down our God. I think…I think you do everything in this world by example. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6)

The respondent here equated bad environmental practices with ‘letting down our God’ and, as such, placed great importance on both the church and individuals within it setting an example to non-members.

In summary, members placed importance on leadership from group leaders, the community-based organisation in general, and themselves as educated and responsible individuals. These were all factors which are referred to by participants as influencing their sustainability practices.
7.2.3 Information provision and exchange

Community-based organisations offered information in several ways to their participants. One important distinction is between information provision, where the practitioners provide information to members, and information exchange, where the community-based organisation offers members the opportunity to pass on ideas and knowledge to each other. The kind of information being provided or exchanged was of several types, and especially focused on information about how to change practices, and information about local possibilities for change (increasing participants’ ‘know-how’ with relation to sustainability practices). Information provision and exchange involved increasing participants understanding of sustainability practice, and their know-how of how to practice sustainably, through the provision of infrastructural resources (information) and activities by the community-based organisation. These were areas in which community-based organisations could make an impact on their members’ sustainability practices.

Different case studies tended towards either providing or exchanging information depending on their activities. Holy Trinity activities had an emphasis on information provision, through for instance church services, and their listings of environmental and ethical shopping options in the town (Green Pages). At the Green Gym in Wakefield, the practitioner tried to provide information about more sustainable ways of acting into conversation with members. She described this as follows:

I don’t try and push it down people’s throat but I always try and introduce issues and topics, and when we are doing things explain why we are doing it. For instance explaining why we are not using chemicals, weed-killers, and even things like just when we are sitting having a cup of tea having a chat about reusing carrier bags and that sort of thing. (Green Gym Practitioner 1, 2006)

The Ecoteams programme, on the other hand was very much a tool for exchanging information, and Women’s Institute and Bollington Ecoteams members reported learning from each other through involvement (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1-5; Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2 and 3). These different approaches resulted in different types of participant experiencing this mechanism in different ways.

Where information was provided in an integrated way with the group or parent organisation’s activity, unengaged participants were more likely to be affected. For instance, many of the Holy Trinity activities either took place within the church or were promoted within it. For ‘unengaged’ HT9 this is important:

The church is bringing these things to our attention. It’s not the same as hearing it on the television, because you can switch off from that. If you are doing it in a
more concentrated form... it has more effect doesn’t it. It’s more one to one.
(Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9)

HT9 therefore found the treatment of environmental and ethical issues by the church a more immediate way of communicating information, one that touched her more directly. She went on to say: “if I didn’t come to church these sort of things ... I wouldn’t have known about” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9). Similarly, in the Green Gym some members noticed the messages on environment that their practitioner is bringing up in conversation. For example, GG2:

LM: Sometime Kathryn talks about environmental things, recycling and things like that? Did you learn anything from that?

GG2: yeah. Well you’ve got to recycle more stuff. You’ve got to look after your light bulbs and everything like in the house. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 2)

This almost incidental means of picking up information was more important for unengaged participants who were less likely to be engaged in the more intensive information exchange that occurs in some of the other projects. One of the other advantages of providing rather than exchanging information, was that practitioners could become known as experts in sustainable practice. Certainly at Holy Trinity the group practitioners were known by members of the congregation as “people you can talk to if you want to know something” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9). HT2 recalled a specific instance where she used a Holy Trinity practitioner as an information resource: “I remember speaking to [practitioner] once, asking her were tetrapaks recyclable” (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2).

Information exchange featured very highly as a mechanism for change in the literature in this area (incidentally this is a reinterpretation of the ‘deliberation’ mechanism that I identified in the literature: 2.4.2), due partly to the predominance of the Ecoteams programme as a case study. In theory a group context will give people the opportunity to talk and share ideas on sustainability issues, and in both the case studies that use the Ecoteams programme in my study, participants reported extensive information exchange in the group setting (Women’s Institute and Bollington). As two of the participants explained:

I think it is joining with other people, and talking to other people. Everybody does something different, you’ve all got your own ideas and you can learn from other people and give your ideas and get some back. That’s what I find interesting. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

Through speaking to other Ecoteam members then you get ideas of other small things that you can do that perhaps you hadn’t thought of before... (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)
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The Ecoteams programme is set up around monthly discussions on current and potential future practice, and, as such, the exchange of each group member’s knowledge of how to act is an important part of the process.

At Holy Trinity, information exchange was less formally incorporated into activities than in the Ecoteams program, and in contrast took place in informal conversations among congregation members in church, at Christian Ecology Group events and at meetings. Some of the members saw Holy Trinity as a place for discussion of environmental and ethical issues. HT7, in a quote that I also cited as evidence of sustainability outcomes in chapter 6, expresses this as follows:

The church is certainly a place where there is concern for these issues. It’s an opportunity to discuss with other people the issues, and learn a bit about them... I think it’s become much more acceptable to discuss it and to follow ethically based things in shopping and also in things like investment. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 7)

This participant saw Holy Trinity as a safe place for discussion of sustainability issues, where people are likely to take sustainability issues seriously, and where people might have knowledge to impart. Among the historically engaged members, HT1 developed his ideas on spirituality and environment through discussions with people who have similar interests in the Christian Ecology Group’s larger network:

Well because of the meetings, you sort of get introduced to different people and you see them again and you get talking to them and pick up on their ideas. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

It is of note that much of the information provided or exchanged in the community-based organisations under study focused on personal solutions to environmental and ethical problems (know-how rather than awareness). This focus on solutions (positive) rather than problems (negative) was particularly strong in the Ecoteams cases (Women’s Institute and Bollington), and is thought to be a more effective way of stimulating change (Jensen 2002). Such a positive approach is discussed in more detail below (see 7.2.7). In the cases under study for this research, both activities and communication were oriented towards finding ways of taking on sustainability practices rather than on discussing the uncertainties around environmental issues. This was also an angle that was valuable to participants, for instance one Women’s Institute member found the process interesting because it allowed her to find out “What other people do.” (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1), and a member from Bollington commented that “you can pick up ideas from other people” (Bollington Carbon
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

Revolution Participants, 2008, 1). For one of the members at Bollington who has limited experience of acting pro-environmentally, this practical emphasis was very important:

If anything it makes you aware that you can take particular steps and there are certain actions that you can perform for quite a low cost, that I wouldn't have known about before, had I not been involved in the group because I wouldn't have known that this particular item existed or how to source it or anything like that… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

Note that this quotation was also given in chapter 6 as evidence of sustainability practice change. The community-based organisations therefore served as a conduit for information on how to live sustainably. It is notable that this information was only appropriate for participants that are currently engaged in some way, and that unengaged participants are likely to react badly to being given information on what to do before establishing why they would want to act in the first place.

Given that these community-based projects were based in places, there was a strong role for the organisations in providing locally tailored information for participants. The local focus of information provision made a difference to participants that were already engaged in environmental or ethical issues. This included historically engaged participants such as HT8 who had made extensive efforts to live sustainably in the past, but still found herself able to learn about local options for fair trade produce:

I’d always done it by mail order because I didn’t think there was anybody local, that actually stocked a lot of fair trade. Now I’ve realised that two if not three shops in town, you can almost guarantee to get fair trade. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8)

Similar effects could be achieved within Ecoteams, and one Bollington respondent with a history of practice reported learning about local possibilities for recycling through involvement:

I’ve also started doing a bit more recycling and things like tetra packs, I wasn’t aware that we had facilities nearby for that (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

While the Ecoteams information packs were generic, the participants in each place were not, and each came with their own understanding of how living sustainably in a place can be achieved.

Some participants recognised how information provision and exchange can be valuable to them, and voiced that at interview as seen above, but the group practitioners did not always understand the value of the services they provide. As a result not all participants took advantage
of the group’s potential for providing and exchanging information. For instance, it had not occurred to one of the Holy Trinity participants that the practitioners might be able to help her with a query about recycling electronics (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 3). One of the historically engaged participants at the Green Gym in Wakefield states that environment was rarely a topic of conversation in the group: “we don’t have regular mealtime discussions on how to improve the quality of the environment because that’s not really on the agenda” (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 7) despite the expertise of the practitioner and some of the participants.

In summary, participants involved in the cases under study were affected by the provision of information by group practitioners and the exchange of information between members. The different types of participant were affected by this mechanism in different ways, mainly in relation to whether they joined the project with a history of sustainability practice or not. When information was provided to participants in a way which integrated with their regular activities this suited unengaged participants as they did not have to make a contribution, and could take on information while following their interest in the core activity of the community-based organisation. Participants with a history of sustainability practice appreciated the provision and exchange of information on how to make changes, and on local options for sustainable living. There was a missed opportunity in some organisations where practitioners could be more effectively used as experts to consult on sustainability practice.

7.2.4 Learning by example

Alongside the provision and exchange of information, members learned about practices from the example set by the organisation that they were involved in, or the practitioners that were active in that organisation. Learning by example involved the community-based organisation providing activities and bringing people together to create new cultural rules for the participants, who reacted by learning more about how to practice sustainably and being motivated to practice sustainably. This was explicitly encouraged, where activities revolved around providing an example of good practice, or more implicitly stimulated by ‘good practice’ from the organisation in question.

Members of the Green Gym, for instance, observed gardening practice in the sites in which they worked as volunteers, and took these practices home with them.

I’ve learned how to recycle stuff as well… How to recycle stuff for planting stuff… like pot noodles and stuff like that, bottles … (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 1)

Because in the community garden we work on the compost I now know hands on how to manage a compost. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)
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I’ve learned a bit about composting… how to go on with it. And what you’ve to do and stuff. (Green Gym Participants, 2006, 13)

I am a bit more aware of... how I can garden for wildlife, and using wildlife to support organic gardening as well. I’ve learned an awful lot... part of the Green Gym is in the organic garden down there… That really boosted all of my knowledge really about that sort of thing... (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

Members in several cases used the community-based organisation’s example to reform their individual practice. This happened in several ways. For instance, participants that were merely exposed to new practices (as exemplified above in the Green Gym case examples) took these practices on as a result of exposure. At Holy Trinity this was particularly the case for those that are new to sustainability. As one participant comments:

It’s a bit like osmosis you know. Because of the ecology group…it’s been there for a long time as you say in church, but it’s gradually become more and more up front really. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 9)

Sometimes the example that participants followed was more explicitly suggested, where for instance members or practitioners explained or showed their own practices. In chapter 6, for instance we heard from HT2 as she took her first steps into understanding and buying Fair Trade after a conversation with a member who organises Fair Trade stalls in church:

I think I got interested it first when [practitioner] had a fair trade stall … ‘cause [she] told me ‘Oh I buy Christmas presents for my god children here’ and I thought, I could do that as well. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)

Here, HT2 found that the example set by the stallholder was a practice that she can also use in her own life. The Ecoteams programme had even more explicit means of encouraging learning by example as one of the Bollington participants explained:

There was an exercise in one of the Ecoteam sessions, where we looked at the contents of [participant’s] cupboard [laughter] sort of random things and we assessed them in terms of the packaging, the food miles and it really made you comprehensively look at labels … (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

In summary, participants learned by example when they were exposed to new practices within an organisation which they then tried out in their own homes, or when other participants or practitioners suggested a new practice more explicitly.
7.2.5 Heightened sense of responsibility

Members reported a heightened sense of responsibility in some of the cases, resulting in more willingness to take on sustainability practices. A heightened sense of responsibility was created when participants felt a greater obligation to practice sustainably as a result of exposure to cultural rules in the community-based organisation. This was created differently in different cases, according to the nature of the activities, or the context of the specific group of activities. For instance, the Ecoteams process used by the Bollington Carbon revolution group involved making commitments to do certain things before the next meeting. Those involved in the Ecoteams pointed out that this put them under some obligation to the group:

you do have a sense that you are reporting back to a group of friends and … you do feel under some obligation to show you have done something. (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 1)

you feel guilty if you do [laughter] … and that stops you doing it ‘cause … you said at a meeting ‘this is what I’ll be doing.’ (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

I do think you are more compelled to follow through with your actions and to take steps when you’re in a group situation so it’s I guess it’s that kind of collective spirit really… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

In a sense, the Ecoteams process created a greater responsibility to the group, even though commitments are made as individuals and according to what each individual felt he or she can do. This sense of responsibility lasted after the group had finished meeting.

Reddish Vale Green Gym participants noted that working on conservation issues within a particular place, gave an experience of nature that was more personal and resulted in a newfound urgency and immediacy in members’ understandings of sustainability problems. Both participants below changed their opinions through their immersion in their local environment.

Partly because we’ve had more contact with nature I think. I felt that very much. We’ve seen the changing of the seasons... up close every Saturday, and really felt it. I’ve felt more sympathetic... to the cause, the need for change really. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 17)

just really being more aware of what was around me and how easy it would be to actually lose it if you don’t think about what you do to the environment (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

Note that the first citation was also given as evidence of the participant changing their sustainability practice in Chapter 6. Coming into close and regular contact with their local nature
through the Green Gym activities heightened these members sense of responsibility for their place, and for environment more generally.

Given that most Women’s Institute members are women over fifty and many had growing families, it was unsurprising that some members expressed a heightened responsibility for future generations, with an eye to the state of the world that they are leaving as a legacy for their grandchildren.

We realised that it wasn’t just for us it was for our grandchildren. We obviously shan’t see the benefit of it ... We just hope that there will be some kind of benefit for them. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 3)

I think increasingly we need to think about what we are doing with what we’ve got for the next generation. (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 4)

The demographic that characterises this group was significant here, and since the emergence of a new generation in their families is rather important to members, that was drawn in to their characterisation of environmental problems.

In summary, the stimulation of a heightened sense of responsibility was highly dependent on the activities that a case engaged in, and sometimes on the context of individual participants. This could be a useful finding, as means of linking activities and connected agendas to heightened responsibility could be more creatively explored.

7.2.6 Goal setting and monitoring

The goal setting and monitoring mechanism is specific to the Ecoteams programme. Ecoteams encourage participants to set targets for themselves, and to measure any changes that they make as a result of these targets. Here, the activities run by the community-based organisation, and the new cultural rules of that organisation with regards sustainability, brought participants’ habitual (bad) practices from their practical into their discursive consciousness, increased their understanding of sustainability practice, and then made them more likely to change those practices. In the cases that used the Ecoteams programme (Women’s Institute and Bollington), the acts of goal setting and monitoring change were mechanisms that instigated change for some participants. The idea of setting a goal was not very much discussed at interview, with participants mainly focusing on the mechanisms of monitoring. The Ecoteams programme stimulated a very participant-oriented way of setting goals however, as one participant explained:

It was very personal… it wasn’t like everybody had to choose to do the same actions because that wouldn’t have been appropriate for each of the different members. There were a number of ideas that were suggested by everybody there
and you could choose the ones that you thought were going to be the most appropriate for you. (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

As the Bollington respondent points out, the goals were set by individuals, and, as such, individuals were able to choose targets that are realistic, appropriate and acceptable to them.

Once goals are set, monitoring the effects of change is quite central to the Ecoteams programme, with members encouraged to note meter readings and weigh their waste for instance. The act of setting goals and monitoring effects made participants more mindful of their goals:

It just made one more conscious of it, with you having to make all your calculations, and having to give in results, it just focused the mind somewhat, and your activities on wanting to achieve something. I wanted to be successful at it anyway! (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

The act of measuring kept this member focused on trying to make a difference. In addition, measuring change made participants more aware of the effects their actions are having:

Just weighing your rubbish, which is pain in the rear end [laughs], as part of the programme you can actually see a change in the weight of the rubbish when you do make these, so it’s nice with the Ecoteams programme ‘cause you’ve got something tangible, you’re thinking well I’m doing this and it is really making a difference… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 2)

While the act of weighing waste was rather irritating for the participant above, she did see the value of it, in that it made her change in practice visible. One Women’s Institute participant took this further by watching the speed of the electricity meter after turning appliances on to see what effect the appliances were having on her consumption (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1). This same participant felt that the monitoring introduced an element of competition into the Ecoteams activities:

When you were weighing all the rubbish you felt that you’d got to get it down. It has got to be less next time... We felt as if you were competing to see if you could get your rubbish down... So you would try harder to recycle more, to not have so much rubbish in your black bin! (Women's Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

This member was competing against her previous measurements, (rather than other group members’ targets) to try to reduce on what she had produced in the past.

In summary, goal setting and monitoring for Ecoteams members (members in the Bollington and Women’s Institute cases) encompassed making commitments to change, and then monitoring the resources that one uses and the waste that one produces. These actions helped
members to focus on their goals, understand the effects they are having, and make special efforts to reduce their impact.

7.2.7 Valuing small changes

In some of the cases (notably Reddish Vale Green Gym, Women’s Institute, Bollington), participants commented on the approach that the community-based organisations took towards sustainability issues. This impacted on members’ willingness to listen to and take on sustainability messages in the cases under study. Members reported an accessible, unthreatening approach to change, which recognises the value of incremental changes in practice. In addition, the involvement in a group was felt to be more positive than trying to make changes alone, and a feeling that change of practice has an impact, no matter how small, influenced some members to take on more actions. This mechanism relates to the positive framing of sustainable living discussed in 4.7.1, and to the ‘meaning’ mechanism seen in the literature (2.4.2). Here, participants begin to value their own sustainability practices as the culture of the organisation shows appreciation for what they are doing.

Part of the reason for these projects being unintimidating was the approach they took to encouraging change. This approach had a rather positive logic, which is that small and manageable changes made by individuals aggregate to make a substantial difference. In a sense, the projects under study gave meaning to small steps made by individuals. Certainly, the Ecoteams programme is based on that logic: part of the process is to aggregate individual members’ outcomes and report back on the effects of the whole group rather than individuals within it. Members in the Ecoteams projects and elsewhere had picked up on this:

Well ok we are only a small group, I am only one single person, but if I can do something that means that I am not making a huge impact on environment then you start small. If everybody does a little bit… (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 4)

One of the things that I enjoyed about the Ecoteam is that they were really small things that you could do that would make a difference, things like turning off a tap when you are brushing your teeth, that kind of thing… (Bollington Carbon Revolution Participants, 2008, 3)

It may not have a huge impact on your gas and electricity bill or whatever but cumulatively it would have an impact. I think people think it’s only a tiny step, but lots of tiny steps make a big stride. That’s something we’ve got to work towards getting people to do. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 1)

… if everybody did as much as I did in little ways then it would go a long way (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 6)
Note that the second quotation here is from someone that was previously unengaged in sustainability practice, and who emphasised the unintimidating nature of the Ecoteams programme. In a sense, the emphasis of the value of small changes, allowed members to move away from a more depressing narrative of environmentalism. Such a belief in small actions making a difference was not always easy to maintain in the face of failure to act and pessimism in society more generally, however:

The number of us who rang the council about recycling and it just had so little effect for so long, until it became mandatory nothing actually happened. (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 8)

In some of the discussions… they didn’t all come on board thinking yes we can make a difference. There would be the mention of ‘what difference is this going to make when America and China are doing what they are doing?’ (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006)

Individual actions for change were not always reciprocated by organisations, in the first quotation here the local council failed to react to Holy Trinity members’ calls for more recycling until it was forced to by law. In addition, the more pessimistic messages about environmental change referred to in the second quotation were not particularly helpful when a group was trying to set itself up with a positive approach.

The nature of community-based sustainability as a group activity is part of the positive experience of members:

I think if you do something in isolation you always feel more dispirited perhaps, but if you are actually with a group of people you can encourage each other and it makes you far more positive about achieving the results… Because you are doing things with likeminded people. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 5)

Cause [Participant Name] always called it ‘the family’ right. And it was. Cause we always kind of looked after one another you know… if any of the girls needed anything and the lads could do it they would help. (Green Gym Practitioner 2, 2007)

Members gained strength from being in a group and trying to tackle environmental issues, rather than trying to deal with them alone. Part of this, as in both first and second quotations above, was to do with being around likeminded people and therefore being comfortable about talking about environmental concerns. Members from other cases also emphasised the feelings of solidarity (as in the final quotation here). While the final quotation does not refer to how the ‘family’ influenced pro-environmental change, several participants in this group experienced substantial practice change (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16 and 17) (see Chapter 6).
Being involved in these group activities on sustainability, inherently encouraged an attitude that one of the Women’s Institute practitioners expresses as: “Be part of the solution instead of part of the problem” (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006). This links in to the logic of making small manageable changes outlined above. As one of the participants put it:

I don’t know whether a few people on their own can do much but you’ve got to do something haven’t you, even if we only do a little bit. (Women’s Institute Participants, 2007, 1)

Despite her misgivings as to the extent of the effects of the changes she is making, this participant had developed an instinct to do something positive, so that she was at least attempting to make a difference.

In summary, members from many cases benefitted from a positive approach to environmental and ethical issues. The approaches taken by the cases under study were non-threatening or unintimidating, gave meaning to small practice adjustments from participants (which was not always easy to hold on to in the face of pessimistic responses), and created a camaraderie around the group. This all resulted in an instinct in participants to “Be part of the solution instead of part of the problem” (Women’s Institute Practitioner 1, 2006).

7.2.8 Spill-over

Spill-over is a concept used in the literature to describe the effect of change in one particular practice on other practices held by an individual (Thogersen and Olander, 2003). If, for instance, an individual learned new gardening practices through membership of a community-based organisation, spill-over would entail that change influencing some other aspect of their practice, for instance their recycling habits. Here, being involved in the community-based organisation brought participants’ habitual practices from their practical into their discursive consciousness, taught them more generally about sustainability practice, and then made them more likely to change related practices that impact on sustainability. Some of the cases under study required respondents to think comprehensively about their lives, and related impacts. The Ecoteams programme used by Bollington and the Women’s Institute, for instance, dealt thoroughly with sets of practice (e.g. water, waste, energy practices) and, as such, was less likely to result in spill-over of practice. The other cases under study did not attempt to influence a participants’ whole lifestyle, and, as such, there was more room for one practice to trigger another.

Two direct examples of spill-over were found in the data. At the Green Gym in Reddish Vale, a respondent had applied learning in composting to other area of waste management:
GG16: I have two compost bins now and am keeping the amount of waste that goes to landfill down to the bare minimum. So I collect plastic, no one collects the plastic from the house I have to take that to the recycling place in [place], but I’m very keen on collecting the glass, and the tins and the paper. Keeping the organic waste into the compost bin, so that my bin bag is as small as it possibly can be for landfill.

LM: Has this all come about since the Green Gym membership?

GG16: Yes. I think what it’s done you see is I’ve started thinking about things a bit more…

Another of the participants in this group also noted changes to various other practices that were not targeted by the Green Gym: “I’m sure it sort of made me more conscious about trying to live more sustainably” (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 18). At Holy Trinity, the respondent who started shopping for presents on the fair trade stall on the suggestion of her fellow member, had gradually increased the amount of fair trade products she bought, and was eventually inspired to design a fair trade week for her class in her role as a schoolteacher. She described this increasing intensity of practice as follows, referring first to her exposure to fair trade on the Holy Trinity stall:

That started me thinking more about the fair trade things and then the more I looked into it for this school project it’s just sort of roller-coastered from there… (Holy Trinity Respondents, 2006, 2)

While the evidence for this mechanism was rather limited in the data, there are links here with the amplification mechanism described above where participants become more sensitised to their own sustainability practice.

In summary, spill-over occurs when one sustainability practice results in the participant reassessing other practices. There is some evidence of this occurring in the data.

### 7.2.9 Benefits exchange

Another mechanism that arose in the literature is ‘benefits exchange’: where an individual swaps environmentally harmful practices of, for instance ‘over-consumption’ for social capital benefits (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). This involves the participant valuing their sustainability practice and volunteering practice as a result of the activities organised by the community-based organisation. There was only one explicit example of this in the data. One participant at Reddish Vale noted that since she was involved the Green Gym, an involvement from which she incurred considerable social and environmental benefits, she no longer has as much time to spend shopping:
We save more actually because we don’t go shopping as much [laughs] There is not much left of the day either by the time we finish at half past one, so there isn’t the opportunity to spend. I don’t think I spend anywhere like as much as I did. (Green Gym Participants, 2007, 16)

7.2.10 Benefits recognition

This mechanism was specific to the Meanwood School case. While walking rather than driving to school is conceived by the practitioner as a sustainability practice, participants at Meanwood School were not required to engage in sustainability issues as part of this activity. As such, none of the above mechanisms applied to them, since they did not engage consciously in a ‘sustainability practice’. Instead their decision to walk to school (and to help other children walk to school), and thus engage in a sustainability practice, was based on the recognition of the benefits that such an activity brought, to the participants themselves, to their children and other children and to the school. In effect this mechanism involves the sustainability practice promoted by the community-based organisation being of value.

Some very clear benefits were offered to parents and families who participate in the walking bus. These are detailed further in the outcomes chapter (6.3.1). The key point for this mechanism is that parents recognised the benefits of their involvement in the walking bus and participate in this sustainability practice as a result. For instance two of the interviewees participated in the walking bus on their days off work, and had their children use the bus on work days to allow them to arrive earlier (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2 and 3). The participants could see the benefits of participation when it brought them advantages on the days that they do not walk, as I quoted in chapter 6: “I get to work earlier, which is also a big bonus from the walking bus I think...” (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 2). One of the other interviewees saw the walking bus as an investment now for expected future returns: when their child was old enough other parents could take her to school (Meanwood School Participants, 2005, 1). This mechanism was not talked about explicitly in the other cases, although there were sometimes other tangible benefits for the participants involved (6.3.1).

7.3 Analysis: the roles of agency and structure

The descriptive list above amounts to a categorisation of the means by which participants in sustainability projects run by community-based organisations were moved to take on sustainability practices. As such, it is useful in its own right, and certainly marks an extension of the current understanding in the literature of the mechanisms that affect participants in this context (2.4.2). In this analysis, I will discuss how mechanisms found in my data relate to those found in the literature. I will then look at how the mechanisms in play relate to the participants’
history of sustainability practice, and how they relate to the particular case studies. Finally I will discuss mechanisms in detail with reference to practice theory, analysing the underlying factors that are affected by each mechanism in practice theory terms.

Table 7.2 Mechanisms in the data and their relationship to mechanisms identified in the literature review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism in data</th>
<th>Mechanism in literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amplification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Standard setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provision and exchange</td>
<td>Deliberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heightened sense of responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting, monitoring and feedback</td>
<td>Deliberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing small changes</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spill-over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits exchange</td>
<td>Benefits exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits recognition</td>
<td>Benefits recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So how do these findings relate back to the literature in this area? The first noticeable consequence of my research is that the list of mechanisms is a lot longer than that given in the literature review. Table 7.2 shows the mechanisms found in the data and their relationship to those found in the literature review. There are some links here that merit further discussion. The mechanism of ‘standard setting’ is defined in the literature review as ‘the group develops standards which individuals then strive to meet and maintain’ (Georg, 1999; Staats et al., 2004). This links in with what I am now calling the ‘leadership’ mechanism, which offers more complexity of explanation in its identification of the various means by which leadership provokes change. The ‘information provision and exchange’ and ‘goal setting, monitoring and feedback’ mechanisms also offer a complex explanations that the previously identified ‘deliberation’ mechanism. This was defined as the opportunity to share information and compare practices (Environ, 1996; Georg, 1999; Hobson, 2001; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Staats et al., 2004; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). ‘Information provision and exchange’ adds an understanding of the influence that information provided by the group has on the participants. ‘Goal setting, monitoring and feedback’ refers specifically to the activities that take place during deliberation that influence change. The mechanism that I previously called ‘meaning’ has been renamed to reflect more accurately what participants experience (‘valuing small changes’) (Maiteny, 2002; Michaelis, 2002; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). ‘Benefits
exchange’ (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000) and ‘benefits recognition’ (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Hobson, 2001; Luckin and Sharp, 2005) came out of both the data and the literature review. The additional mechanisms that I found in my study (amplification, learning by example, heightened sense of responsibility, spill-over) are likely to be attributable to the broader selection of case studies than in the existing literature.

Table 7.3 List of mechanisms active for participants by different histories of sustainability practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant type</th>
<th>Mechanisms in play</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historically engaged</td>
<td>Amplification, Leadership, Information provision and exchange (how to practice),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heightened sense of responsibility, Valuing small changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently engaged</td>
<td>Leadership, Information provision and exchange (how to practice), Learning by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>example, Heightened sense of responsibility, Goal setting, monitoring and feedback,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spill-over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary ethos</td>
<td>Amplification, Leadership, Information provision and exchange (how to practice),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning by example, Heightened sense of responsibility, Goal setting, monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and feedback, Valuing small changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability values</td>
<td>Information provision and exchange (how to practice), Heightened sense of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsibility, Goal setting, monitoring and feedback, Valuing small changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unengaged</td>
<td>Leadership, Information provision and exchange (understanding sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>practice), Learning by example, Heightened sense of responsibility, Valuing small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>changes, Spill-over, Benefits exchange, Benefits recognition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the mechanisms detailed above do not only affect participants with one type of sustainability practice history. Table 7.3 shows which mechanisms were in play for each participant type. All participant types were affected by multiple mechanisms, and there are few patterns discernable from the table. As such, it is in the main inappropriate to see mechanisms as affecting participants with different sustainability practice histories differently. There were a few exceptions here. The mechanism of amplification, for instance, did not affect any of the types of participant who do not currently undertake sustainability practices, as it relied on a practice being in place in order for that practice to be amplified. The information provision and exchange mechanism was also interesting, because it affected the previously engaged or unengaged differently. Members who were previously unengaged were affected by the provision of information in terms of understanding sustainability practices in the first place, whereas those with some experience of sustainability issues found information on ‘how to’ practice sustainably,
sometimes within the particular place they inhabit. In general, however, many most of the mechanisms affect people with different sustainability practice histories similarly.

Mechanisms vary more substantially by case study, as the different cases drew on some mechanisms above others, in particular when different activities run in the cases stimulated different mechanisms. The list of mechanisms active by case study is shown in Table 7.4. The influence of the case studies was particularly apparent with the ‘goal setting monitoring and feedback’ mechanism, which only applied to those cases that used the Ecoteams activity. In addition, the ‘benefits recognition’ mechanism was the only mechanism active in the Meanwood School case, where participants were not required to consciously engage with issues of sustainability in their activities on the walking bus, and, as such, where the main mechanism to take on sustainability practice was the recognition of the benefits that the bus will bring to themselves, their child, and the school more generally. In theory all of these mechanisms could be activated in all cases, and hopefully the list I have generated here will lead to a more detailed understanding in these organisations of how change can be triggered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study</th>
<th>Mechanisms in action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwood School</td>
<td>Benefits recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>Amplification; Leadership; Information provision and exchange; Learning by example; Valuing small changes; Spill-over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Gym</td>
<td>Amplification; Leadership; Information provision and exchange; Learning by example; Heightened sense of responsibility; Valuing small changes; Spill-over; Benefits exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Amplification; Leadership; Information provision and exchange; Heightened sense of responsibility; Goal setting, monitoring and feedback; Valuing small changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bollington</td>
<td>Amplification; Leadership; Information provision and exchange; Learning by example; Heightened sense of responsibility; Goal setting, monitoring and feedback; Valuing small changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As well as looking at the specific literature on the role of community-based organisations in stimulating change, which refers to similar mechanisms observed empirically, it is useful to consider the mechanisms uncovered in this analysis in relation to the defining theory of this study: practice theory. In order to do this, I have considered each mechanism in turn, and re-expressed it in practice theory terms. A full summary of this exercise is shown in Table 7.5. I have attempted here to dissect each mechanism, in terms of which elements of practice are drawn on to stimulate change. These elements include many of the terms outlined by Giddens in his work in the area (Giddens, 1984): practical consciousness, discursive consciousness, rules
and resources. They also draw on the categorisation of rules and resources that I made in Chapter 4 of this thesis (4.7). The description of each element also further specifies the concept of discursive consciousness, explained in more detail below.

The most evident pattern in this analysis is that all the mechanisms draw on elements of the discursive consciousness of the participant and the structures of the community-based organisation. So, for instance, with the first mechanism of amplification listed in Table 7.5 change happens because the participant draws on their own discursive consciousness (in particular the elements of knowing how to practice sustainably, and wanting to practice sustainably) as well as the organisational resources offered by the community-based organisation (the activities that they organise which remind the participant of sustainability practice). Further, as a result of these discursive consciousness and resource elements being present, the practice moves from the participants’ practical consciousness into their discursive consciousness: becoming an act that is conscious rather than instinctively followed.

Table 7.5 List of mechanisms with practice theory explanation of the effects of each one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism name</th>
<th>What is happening</th>
<th>What elements of practice are drawn on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Amplification  | Re-examining and adjusting practice | Practice moves from practical into discursive consciousness  
Discursive consciousness (knowing how to practice sustainably, wanting to practice sustainably)  
Organisational Resources (activities) |
| Leadership     | Taking inspiration from others and setting an example in one’s own practice | Discursive consciousness (wanting to practice sustainably)  
Cultural Rules (norm setting)  
Organisational Resources (leadership) |
| Information provision and exchange | Changing resources available to individual by providing or sharing information on how to act sustainably (in a particular community) | Discursive consciousness (knowing how to practice sustainably, understanding sustainability practice)  
Infrastructural Resources (increasing access to information within and about sustainability practice in the community)  
Organisational Resources (activities, bringing people together) |
| Learning by example | Taking inspiration and understanding of how to act sustainably from others’ actions | Discursive consciousness (knowing how to practice sustainably, wanting to practice sustainably)  
Cultural Rules (norm setting)  
Organisational Resources (activities, bringing people together) |
### Mechanism name | What is happening | What elements of practice are drawn on
--- | --- | ---
Heightened sense of responsibility | Feeling compelled by a sense of responsibility to take on or intensify sustainability practice | Discursive consciousness (feeling obligation to practice sustainably)  Cultural Rules (norm setting)
Goal setting and monitoring | Setting targets to change practice and monitoring progress | Practice moves from practical into discursive consciousness  Discursive consciousness (understanding sustainability practice)  Cultural Rules (norm setting)  Organisational Resources (activities)
Valuing small changes | Creating a culture where individuals feel that even small changes are worth making | Discursive consciousness (valuing sustainability practice)  Cultural Rules (norm setting)
Spill-over | Practice in one domain targeted by the community-based organisation affects practice in another that is not targeted | Practice moves from practical into discursive consciousness  Discursive consciousness (knowing how to practice sustainably, understanding sustainability practice)
Benefits exchange | Practice of community involvement takes up time or resources that unsustainable activities previously occupied | Discursive consciousness (valuing sustainability practice)  Organisational Resources (activities)
Benefits recognition | Practice of community involvement brings new resources to the individual concerned | Discursive consciousness (valuing sustainability practice)  Organisational Resources (activities)

So all the mechanisms draw on the discursive consciousness of the participant in at least one way. The observed elements of discursive consciousness from this analysis of the data are as follows:

- Understanding sustainability practice;
- Knowing how to practice sustainably;
- Valuing sustainability practice;
- Wanting to practice sustainably;
- Feeling an obligation to practice sustainably.

This list is not intended as a list of all the potential elements of discursive consciousness which might affect sustainability practice. It could be the case that more elements of discursive consciousness exist and are having an influence on sustainability practice in the context of
community-based organisations. Neither is it to be understood as a list of essential elements that a participant must hold in order to change their practice. Indeed, we see participants with very different sustainability practice histories drawing on similar mechanisms here. So for instance the leadership mechanism stimulates participants to ‘want to practice sustainably’ irrespective of their sustainability practice history. Note the contrast to models from psychology that use attitudes as central explanatory concepts, and economics that use rational choice (discussed in 2.2.1 in more detail). Here, various facets of both understanding and values elements are taken into account in explaining why practice change occurs. By taking a practice theory approach here, I believe I have come to a more holistic answer to the question ‘why does change happen’.

On the other hand, only some of the mechanisms include reference to the practical consciousness. Here, three of the mechanisms operate by moving a practice from the participants’ practical to discursive consciousness. These are the amplification, goal setting and monitoring and spill-over mechanisms. By their nature, sustainability projects run by community-based organisations are not equipped to tackle practical consciousness (or habitual behaviours) directly. Instead they move habitual practices (back) into the discursive consciousness stimulating the participant to re-examine their habitual acts.

All mechanisms also draw on the rules or resources (cultural, infrastructural and organisational) of the community-based organisation in some way. Structural elements therefore include:

- Cultural rules (norm setting by valuing and normalising sustainability practice);
- Infrastructural resources (providing a platform for sharing information);
- Organisational resources (activities run by the group, leadership in the group).

These elements were first observed in Chapter 4 where they are discussed in more detail (4.7). Note here that some, but not all, mechanisms have an activity associated with them (an organisational resource) or a service (an infrastructural resource). As such, the resources provided are not just about what the group does for the participant in question, but also the culture that is created by the very existence of the community-based organisation in question. Hence the mechanisms of leadership, heightened sense of responsibility and valuing small changes are much more associated with the creation of cultural rules around sustainability than the provision of any service or activity in particular.

This example brings us nicely to the cyclical nature of the relationship between discursive consciousness elements of the participant and the rules and resources offered by the community-based organisation. While until this point I have concentrated on the impact of structural elements and consciousness elements on sustainability practice, there is also emerging evidence here of participants’ sustainability practice in turn impacting on the structural elements
identified. This is seen, for instance in the ‘leadership’ mechanism where some of the participants take on a leadership mentality, in reaction to the leadership of their community-based organisation, which in turn could set an example for other members. It is also seen in the secondary sustainability outcomes seen in Chapter 6, where participants took what they have learned from the community-based organisation into other domains of their lives (6.2.3). The cultural changes that were documented in Chapter 4 are further evidence of both practitioners and participants affecting the nature of the community-based organisation (4.7.1).

In summary then, the list of mechanisms was more substantial and in places more specific than the original list identified from the literature. Most of the mechanisms identified in this chapter affected participants from multiple sustainability practice histories, and across multiple cases. There were a few exceptions where participants with specific practice histories and from specific cases were affected by specific mechanisms. When analysed according to practice theory, all the mechanisms were found to draw on both the participants’ discursive consciousness and the rules and resources provided by the community-based organisation. There was also some evidence of a cyclical relationship between agency and structure here.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter summarised the mechanisms in play in the context of community-based organisations attempts to influence their members’ sustainability practices. The first contribution here was a codification of the mechanisms in play in the case studies for the thesis, which amounts to a more substantial list to that identified in the literature on this topic to date. There were rather limited connections between active mechanisms and the participants’ sustainability history or the specific case study that a participant had belonged to. The only mechanism that exclusively affected participants with a particular history was the amplification mechanism. The information provision and exchange mechanism was also found to affect participants in different ways according to their history of practice. Some mechanisms were unique to particular case studies (e.g. benefits recognition to Meanwood School). When these mechanisms were subjected to analysis using practice theory terminology, all were found to be drawing on both agency (participant discursive consciousness) and structure (community-based organisation resources and rules) to stimulate change.

In the next chapter I will summarise the contribution of the thesis, and discuss the implications for an understanding of the role of community-based organisations in motivating their participants to take on change in practice.
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants
8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

In chapters 4 to 7 I detailed the results of the research, analysed the significance of each set of results, and commented on its relation to the literature. As such, I have already started to build a picture of this thesis’s contribution to understanding the role of community-based organisations in sustainability practice. In this chapter I tell the story of this thesis’s theoretical contribution, linking each element back to the literature to which it contributes.

First, I explain what effects community-based organisations have on participants’ sustainability practices, thus developing a clearer understanding of this particular process of change than is currently available in the literature (8.2). This includes outlining the evidence that involvement in a community-based organisation’s project on sustainability affects participants’ practices, with a detailed explanation of the complexity of such an effect on people with different sustainability histories and with different levels of involvement in the activity in question (drawing on Chapters 5 and 6). Second, I explain how these sustainability practice effects come about with reference to the practice theory literature (8.3). This includes explaining how rules and resources of the community-based organisations, and discursive consciousness of the participant, work together to change sustainability practices (drawing on Chapters 4 and 7). I also comment here on my contribution to practice theory in the context of sustainable consumption as a result of the work of this thesis. Third, I analyse the significance of the additional outcomes that participants experience in relation to the literature on sustainable consumption and wellbeing (8.4, drawing on Chapter 6). Finally, I comment on how my findings contribute to the community governance literature in a discussion of the implication of my thesis for an understanding of the role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practice change (8.5).

For clarity then, in this chapter I am summarising my contribution to the following strands of the literature identified in Chapter 2:

1. The current understanding of this particular change process;
2. How practice theory is applied in sustainable consumption;
3. Understandings of sustainable consumption and wellbeing;
4. Understandings of community governance for sustainability

Each of these areas will be touched on in turn in the following four sections.
8.2 What change occurs

One of the aims of this thesis was to develop an understanding of the changes in sustainability practice that can occur as a result of participants’ involvement in sustainability projects run by community-based organisations. Following the principles of realistic evaluation, I set out to answer the question ‘what works, for whom, in what circumstances’, thus making an assumption from the start that these projects would affect different types of people in different ways (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The key findings here (covered in Chapters 5 and 6) were as follows:

**Finding 1:** Participants had a range of sustainability practice histories as they entered these projects, and this impacted on the intensity of sustainability practice change they were able to take on;

**Finding 2:** The nature of a participant’s involvement in the community-based organisation, the cohesiveness of the community-based organisation and the nature of activities run by the community-based organisation also impacted on the intensity of sustainability practice change;

**Finding 3:** Participants reported a range of changes in sustainability practice in connection with their involvement with the community-based organisation’s sustainability projects, from substantial change to no change.

In order to make use of these findings in different contexts, a general theory of ‘what change occurs’ as a result of interventions by community-based organisations is offered in diagram form in Figure 8.1. This theory explains the relationship between a participant's engagement in a community-based organisation’s activities and the sustainability practice outcomes that they report. Given that it is based on qualitative, in-depth evidence, this theory does not offer a predictive model for how people will react to interventions by community-based organisations, instead, it teases out some of the dimensions along which greater or lesser change has been observed. A detailed explanation of Figure 8.1 follows.
Figure 8.1 Model of what change occurs in the context of interventions by community-based organisations, in terms of the intensity of potential sustainability practice outcomes
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants

Figure 8.1 is to be read from left to right, as a simple representation of the process of a participant joining a community-based organisation, partaking in an activity and experiencing a sustainability practice outcome. By then reading the diagram top to bottom, we find the dimensions which correspond to each element in this process (participant, membership, community-based organisation and activity). The positive and negative signs show that the dimension at the top of the diagram is more likely to experience a high intensity of change in sustainability practice outcomes than the dimension at the bottom of the diagram. Each element from left to right, then, has dimensions which influence the strength of change. On the right hand side of the diagram, I show the potential sustainability practice outcomes. These are ranked according to their intensity (from substantial to no change). The combination of the left to right process, and the top to bottom dimensions in the diagram, lead to a reading of which factors make which intensity of practice change more likely. As such, if a participant is unengaged or has sustainability values, their involvement in the community-based organisation is active, that organisation is cohesive, and the activity they engage in is sustainability-practice based, they are most likely to report substantial sustainability practice change. A more detailed explanation of the diagram follows, along with a commentary on the contribution of this theory to the literature.

One of the problems in the literature prior to this study was a lack of clarity as to how people entered these projects, and, as a result, a lack of understanding of what change was really occurring. As was noted in the literature review (see 2.4.4), participant characteristics that were believed to set a positive context for change (participants having a positive attitude to and good understanding of sustainability) were also reported as outcomes of these processes by other authors (Georg, 1999; Church and Elster, 2002; Maiteny, 2002; Staats et al., 2004). As such, an important element of this study was to understand participants’ starting points as they entered the project, in order to gain a full understanding of what changed in their practice by the end of the process. As I have explained, people with a range of sustainability practice histories join these projects. I categorised these histories in a scale from historically engaged to unengaged in Chapter 5 (5.2.3). This depth of categorisation was important because it avoided oversimplification, and, as such, followed a recent trend in the sustainable consumption literature for more subtle characterisation of people’s sustainability practice histories (McDonald et al., 2006). I also reported in Chapter 6 that participants from the full range of sustainability practice histories reported sustainability practice changes (6.2.5). The effect of a participant’s sustainability practice history on the outcomes they report as a result of involvement in community-based sustainability activities is therefore represented in Figure 8.1. Here, the shape of a person on the left hand side of the diagram represents the participant, and the dimensions affecting the intensity of outcomes are given above and below that participant (labelled here as
unengaged and historically engaged). This means that while participants with all sustainability practice histories report change (and equally participants with all sustainability practice histories report no change), there is more likelihood of substantial practice change among unengaged or sustainability values participants given that, by definition, they currently hold limited sustainability practices. This relationship is a relatively weak one, however, and should not be used to exclude those with existing practices from these processes as they still report practice change.

The second factor that affected outcomes was participants’ exposure to the community-based organisation in question. In Figure 8.1 this is represented by the box ‘level of involvement’ which has the dimensions ‘actively’ or ‘peripherally’ involved. The issue of degree of involvement is not covered in the directly related literature, which does not bring up the potential for the different levels of involvement by different participants, never mind the effect that might have on practice. In some of my cases, I found that participants’ were involved in the community-based organisation to a greater or lesser extent (see 5.3.2 for a detailed discussion). In Chapter 6 I reported that those that were actively involved were more likely to report substantial change than those that were peripherally involved (6.2.5). While the literature prior to my study did not deal with this issue directly, it is fairly predictable that more exposure to a project would lead to more change. The ‘level of involvement’ factor, indeed, adds subtlety to the explanation of what change occurs by noting that intensity of change depends on intensity of involvement in a project. This also reminds us of the voluntary nature of these projects, as involvement cannot be forced, and, as such, sustainability practice outcomes will always be dependent on people volunteering in the first place. This is often the case with policy that tackles social issues, and Pawson and Tilley point out that rather than agonising about who is not affected by policy, the object of research should be to gain a good understanding of who is able to be affected because they have volunteered to be actively involved (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The nature of participants as volunteers was discussed in Chapter 5, where I found that in most of the case studies participants were representative of the general volunteering population (see 5.3). This does mean that substantial parts of the population are hard to reach using this measure. This is an important learning point from my thesis, as the issue of who volunteers has not been considered in the sustainability literature until now. Note that in my thesis, most participants in the cases under study fell into the ‘actively’ involved category, and were therefore more likely to take on sustainability practices. This was connected to the nature of activities, most of which required active participation (Meanwood School, Green Gym, Women’s Institute and Bollington’s Ecoteams programme) with only two cases allowing for peripheral membership (Holy Trinity, Bollington’s other activities).
The third factor that affects sustainability practice outcomes is the cohesiveness of the community-based organisation in question. This is represented in Figure 8.1 by the box ‘community-based organisation’ which has the dimensions ‘cohesive’ and ‘divided’. This factor was included because two of the cases under study had particularly cohesive groups (Reddish Vale Green Gym and the Women’s Institute Ecoteams), and others were substantially more divided (Holy Trinity, Bollington). The intensity of practice change in the cohesive groups was higher than of that in the divided groups. The directly related literature backs up these findings, with different authors claiming that strong social interaction and mutual trust between group members (Mosler, 1993; Staats et al., 2004) and a cohesive community with a strong sense of identity (Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Luckin and Sharp, 2005) have an impact on outcomes. The next question here, is how to create cohesive groups, since these are more likely to stimulate practice change. This is beyond the scope of my thesis research, although it is worth noting that both pre-existing groups (the Women’s Institute) and a newly-formed group (Reddish Vale Green Gym) in this study managed to create strong social bonds and a sense of identity.

The fourth factor that affects intensity of sustainability practice outcomes is the nature of the activity in question. This is represented in Figure 8.1 by the box ‘activity’ with the two possible dimensions of ‘sustainability practice’ or ‘sustainability activities’. For clarity: Meanwood School and Green Gym projects were sustainability activity-based (they focus around a sustainability activity which can then have a secondary influence on sustainability practice), whereas Holy Trinity, Women’s Institute and Bollington addressed sustainability practice directly (sustainability-practice based). In Chapter 6, the sustainability activity-based projects were found to have less of an impact on participants’ sustainability practice than the sustainability practice projects. This distinction between types of groups was not raised in the existing literature in this area. Instead various other rather procedural factors relating to the nature of the activity concerned were brought up as having an impact on sustainability practice. So, for instance, there were claims in the literature that it is important that an activity is determined and led by the group, that it concerns an issue deemed important locally and is approached in a positive light (Church and Elster, 2002; Michaelis, 2002; Alexander et al., 2007) and that the activity is well funded and competently managed (Church and Elster, 2002; Staats et al., 2004). These factors hold true in my research, but they are more procedural than substantive: in effect they explain how to run a good project rather than which projects will stimulate sustainability practice change in their participants. Another factor brought up as a condition for success in the literature: that the activity has goals in both social and environmental areas (Environ, 1996; Howard et al., 2005; Sustainable Development Commission, 2006). This was
certainly not found to be true in the cases under study, with the Women’s Institute and Holy Trinity meeting some sustainability practice change success while not having any social goals.

Sustainability practice change took several different forms for the participants, and in Chapter 6 I categorised these forms into a typology of intensity of sustainability practice change: from substantial change, to no change at all (see 6.2). These intensities of change are shown in Figure 8.1 on the far right of the diagram. In itself this is a contribution to understanding, as in the literature the level of practice change was rather disputed, with some authors reporting positive (maintained) practice change (Staats et al., 2004), and others noting only limited environmental effects (Church and Elster, 2002). Part of the problem in the literature was the lack of distinction between types of participants, types of community-based organisation, and types of activities that are brought out in my theory. So, for instance, Staats et al.’s work above evaluates the Ecoteams programme whereas Church and Elster look at a much wider range of projects with both social and environmental goals. In Church and Elster’s work they note that the four out of 17 projects that have an impact on environment hold environment goals very centrally, whereas projects which have more peripheral environmental goals have less impact (Church and Elster, 2002). This, to some extent, supports the fourth ‘factor’ in Figure 8.1, as, again, the more directly the activity targets an issue the more likely that sustainability practice outcomes will follow. The value of Figure 8.1 is to help us to understand how specific outcomes are achieved in different project types.

Given that at the start of this project one of the most talked about initiatives in the literature was the Ecoteams programme, it is useful to comment in some detail on how my work contributes to an understanding of that programme. This also allows me to show how my Figure 8.1 aids in an understanding of the potential of a particular type of initiative to affect sustainability practices. My theory on ‘what change occurs’ provides an interesting lens through which to explore the programme. Ecoteams attracts participants with some history of sustainability practice, requires active involvement, tends to produce relatively cohesive (small) groups and is sustainability practice-based. As such, it mainly tends towards the positive dimensions at the top of Figure 8.1, with the exception of the participants’ sustainability practice history. My categorisation of people by sustainability practice history in Chapter 5, and subsequent analysis by case, reveals ‘for whom’ the Ecoteams programme stimulates sustainability practice change, an issue not covered in the literature on Ecoteams to date. The Women’s Institute and Bollington Ecoteams projects only engaged people with a current interest in sustainability (those that at a minimum claimed to hold ‘sustainability values’ before joining the group, including those that are ‘historically engaged’ or that held a ‘complementary ethos’). Interestingly, in the literature on Ecoteams, two authors also noted that people having an initial
interest in sustainability was an important contextual factor that determined whether people would change their practice or not (Georg, 1999; Maiteny, 2002). What I find here, is that people’s initial interest in sustainability determines whether people will join an Ecoteam, rather than determining whether they will change their practices once they are a member. While the type of person involved in Ecoteams is limited to those with an existing interest in sustainability, most participants in my study involved in this programme (10/11) reported incremental practice change (small changes to several practices). As such, the programme is very successful in promoting sustainability practice change in comparison to some of my other cases. By looking at Ecoteams through the model in Figure 8.1, the question of ‘for whom’ these projects have an impact becomes clear. While the Ecoteams programme is highly successful for a certain type of participant, it cannot be used to influence those that are currently unengaged in sustainability issues. This suggests that an estimation of the potential for the Ecoteams programme in society at large must take into account that such a programme is inherently limited to those with an initial interest in sustainability.

My model of ‘what change occurs’ (Figure 8.1) represents an important contribution to the literature that explains the effects of community-based sustainability initiatives on participants’ sustainability practice. Given the connection here between level of participant involvement, the nature of the activity, the cohesiveness of the organisation (all associated with exposure to sustainability projects run by community-based organisations) and the final sustainability practice outcome, it is fair to say that the change that occurred in the participants I talked to was as a result of the involvement of each participant in the community-based organisation. Note that I have deliberately kept my explanation rather simplistic here, using language like ‘more likely’ and ‘greater potential’. This is related to the size of the sample I am working with (45 participants), which makes me reluctant to generalise further. While it is safe to say that there is a connection between the degree of exposure to a community-based organisation’s activities and the degree of sustainability practice change from the data I have presented, a more formal description of the relationships of all of these elements will be a task for future research. I believe, however, that by offering a theory of what change occurs in Figure 8.1 I have addressed the confusion in the literature prior to my research.

8.3 How change occurs

I have now established ‘what change occurs’, and most importantly that the intensity of sustainability practice change that a person experiences depends on their sustainability practice history, and the level and nature of their involvement in the community-based organisation in question. The next step is to explain ‘how change occurs’. To do this I draw on results and
analysis of Chapters 4 (on community context) and 7 (on mechanisms). At this point I am also both drawing on and contributing to practice theory. The key findings here were that:

**Finding 4:** The community-based organisation offered new organisational and infrastructural resources to participants which helped them change sustainability practice, and influenced the rules of the community on sustainability practice;

**Finding 5:** The participant also brought personal resources to the organisation which had an impact on what changes in sustainability practice could be achieved;

**Finding 6:** These rules and resources impacted on sustainability practice when participants’ discursive consciousness was also activated to take on change, amounting to the interaction between agency and structure stimulating change in sustainability practice.

Again, in order to account for how change happens, I propose a theory of practice change in the context of interventions by community-based organisations to stimulate sustainability practices. This theory is represented in Figure 8.2. Here, I integrate the explanations of how change occurs from my data with more general explanations of change in the practice theory literature.

Figure 8.2 shows the interactions that take place when change occurs in the context of community-based organisations. There are three main elements: the structure, (represented by the circle labelled ‘community-based organisation’ around the outside of the diagram), the agency (represented by the picture of a person in the centre of the diagram), and the sustainability practices (represented by a box in the centre of the diagram). The most direct influence of participants (and therefore agency) on practice is represented by the arrow that links discursive consciousness with sustainability practice. The dotted arrow between practical consciousness and sustainability practice shows that while the influence of the former on the latter is possible, it has not been observed within this kind of project. Instead, there is an indirect connection between practical consciousness and sustainability practices, via the discursive consciousness. The community-based organisation (the circle around the outside of the diagram) provides rules and resources to the participant, which impact on both the existence of such a project, and, in turn, on changes to sustainability practice. The double-ended blue arrows which connect the three main elements (the community-based organisation, the participant and their sustainability practice) represent the recursive nature of the relationship between agency and structure in creating practice. Note that the structural elements of the model in Figure 8.2 are not intended to be interpreted as static. On the contrary, all structural factors could be subject to
change as a result of investment, policy or additional infrastructure. Instead, by distinguishing four structural elements that have an impact on participant opportunities to take on sustainability practices (in the context of community-based projects on sustainability), I highlight the potential for resourcing these initiatives more fully. This is discussed in more detail in the conclusion to the thesis (see 9.3).

So Figure 8.2 makes clear that community-based organisations influence participants’ sustainability practices by changing the rules and resources available to them. In doing so, Figure 8.2 helps to outline the social context of the scope for change in this context (the potential and limits inherent in the structural factors of organisational, infrastructural and people resources and cultural rules). The idea of rules and resources as structurally influential elements is developed from Giddens and Southerton et al., and explained more fully in 4.7 (Giddens, 1984; Southerton et al., 2004b). Indeed in Chapter 4, I explained how community-based organisations offered organisational and infrastructural resources to their participants to aid them in taking on sustainability practices, as well as helping to create cultural rules which embedded sustainability practice in the organisations in question, and framed sustainability practice as positive. The rules and resources I identified in my data have some parallels in Southerton et al.’s work on structural factors, with, for instance, their terminology of ‘norms of social interaction’ (cultural rules), and ‘material and infrastructural arrangements’ (infrastructural resources) being present in my work (Southerton et al., 2004b). ‘Organisational resources’ are more difficult to find in the literature: these represent the social, economic and human capital held by each community-based organisation. Given that the community-based organisation is the entity that targets sustainability practice in this context, these resources were important here. In addition, I found that these projects drew on the personal resources of their participants as volunteers to create opportunities for sustainability practice change. Again, perhaps due to the lack of research to date on volunteering in a sustainability context, this was not often raised in the sustainability literature, although there was a recognition that volunteers bring skills and enthusiasm to these kinds of activities (Stocker and Barnett, 1998; Robbins and Rowe, 2002).
Figure 8.2 Factors affecting sustainability practice in the context of interventions by community-based organisations
The practical and discursive consciousness elements of Figure 8.2 were mainly covered in Chapter 7 of the thesis. In work on sustainable consumption and practice theory, the discursive consciousness has received relatively little attention, with the main focus being on habitual behaviour as stimulated by structural factors (see for instance Shove, 2003). In my work, the participants’ discursive consciousness was quite prominent given that it had an effect on sustainability practice in all of the mechanisms outlined in 7.3. There are interesting parallels with other literatures here, with the discursive consciousness elements in Figure 8.2 dividing into knowledge-related elements (being aware of sustainability practice, understanding sustainability practice and knowing how to practice sustainably) and value-related elements (valuing sustainability practice, wanting to practice sustainably, feeling obligation to practice sustainably). As I discussed in the literature review, economists tend to frame rational thought as the impetus for changing behaviour, psychologists focus on attitudes and values as a central explanation of behaviour (Elster, 1989; Ajzen, 1991). Ultimately, practice theory tries to integrate both knowledge and values explanations within a social context (Giddens, 1984), just as I have tried to do in Figure 8.2 above. In addition, I have come up with some specific elements of knowledge and values that influence change which clarify the need for information and persuasion. Identifying that know-how about sustainability practices impacts on practice, for instance, is very different to promoting the importance of a more general understanding of sustainability, as is also pointed out in the literature (Jensen, 2002).

As the particular interventions under study here address sustainability practice in a discursive way, the participant’s practical consciousness only impacts on change in practice when practices in the practical consciousness are brought into the discursive consciousness (when habits are thought about by the participant). In some of the active mechanisms in this study we saw the movement of practices from practical to discursive consciousness, ultimately impacting on sustainability practice. This is represented in Figure 8.2, where practical consciousness does not impact on sustainability practice directly, but only when it is moved into the discursive consciousness. This resonates with another area of the environmental psychology literature, where Geller talks of a need to move ‘bad’ environmental behaviour out of the ‘automatic’ and into the ‘conscious’, before changing that behaviour and eventually becoming unconsciously competent (Geller, 2002). It is also apparent in one of the studies of the Ecoteams programme, where Hobson found that reconsideration of practices stimulated by Ecoteams could result in new habits (Hobson, 2003). Hobson indeed frames this change in Giddensian terms: talking of ‘bringing habits from practical to discursive consciousness’ (ibid. p. 104). In my research, we also see the community-based organisation helping the participant to move their
practices from practical to discursive consciousness, and in doing so allowing participants to think about their current practices and how they could be altered.

So how does this model contribute to the academic literature on sustainable consumption? This is the first attempt to integrate practice theory into explanations of change in practice in the sustainable consumption context. Until now, practice theory work in the sustainable consumption area has tended to study how things are rather than how things could be changed (Shove, 2003; Spaargaren, 2003; Southerton et al., 2004a). Such research is very important for an understanding of change, providing the foundations for understanding practice as it now stands. Spreading the use of practice theory into studies of consumption change is an important additional contribution of this thesis, however. In an area of policy which is criticised for focusing too much on economic interventions (Dobson, 2007) and where responsibility is often placed rather unsuccessfully on the shoulders of the individual (Maniates, 2002), practice theory provides a more holistic way forward for considering sustainable consumption policy and possibilities for intervention. I hope that the model I have proposed here will be adapted for the study of different types of intervention for sustainable consumption in the future. It certainly mirrors a more holistic view of policy for sustainable consumption that seems to be emerging in reaction to the ‘isolated technical fixes’ which van Vliet et al criticise (van Vliet et al., 2005).

Another important contribution I am making here in relation to practice theory, is the incorporation of both agency and structural factors in explaining sustainable consumption practices. As I identified in the literature review (2.2.2), research on sustainable consumption in the practice theory domain has tended to focus on structural determinants of sustainable consumption, perhaps in reaction to a history of sustainable consumption research which only took internal factors into consideration. In my model of ‘how change occurs’ I recognise the interrelationship between the internal (agency or psychological) and external (structural or sociological) factors affecting practice. Indeed, in uncovering the mechanisms at play in the particular cases under study I have also found that the interaction between these two explains the change that participants report in their sustainability practices (Chapter 7). In sustainability practice terms this is not particularly surprising: after all the very nature of the set of theories is that they incorporate both agency and structure explanations. In the context of sustainable consumption research, however, this amounts to an extension of practice theory to incorporate both internal and external elements.

### 8.4 Role of additional outcomes

When I first started this thesis, a powerful theory in the sustainable consumption field suggested that additional outcomes (especially positive social outcomes) could influence
participants to change their sustainability practices. This theory came from work by Jackson on wellbeing, who noted that most models of behavioural change concerned with environment do not take into account outcomes outside the environmental ones, although additional outcomes may be important to participant engagement (Jackson, 2005). Many of these additional potential outcomes (social, community-building, personal development, health) are given as reasons for volunteering in the more general volunteering literature (Bussell and Forbes, 2002). In addition, in the sustainability literature it was suggested that ‘exchange of benefits’ (swapping unsustainable practices for social capital) could be a motivation for changing practice (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000). In a broader contribution to this debate, Seyfang proposed a new vision of sustainable consumption that focuses on low-impact lifestyles within cohesive communities, lifestyles which are believed to increase wellbeing (Seyfang, 2009).

This issue was addressed by results and analysis in Chapter 6 (6.3). The main findings on the role of additional outcomes were as follows:

Finding 7: Positive additional outcomes were indeed reported by some participants, but they tended to be participants that were new to volunteering; negative additional outcomes were also reported, mainly by participants who were currently volunteering in several places.

Finding 8: There did not seem to be a direct connection between sustainability practice change and additional outcomes.

For clarity then, people joining these projects had a varied volunteering record (as identified in 5.3) and this was the main factor that affected the additional outcomes that they experienced. Positive additional outcomes (including positive social outcomes) were mainly experienced by new volunteers. Negative outcomes (such as frustration associated with volunteering) were mainly experienced by serial volunteers. In addition, there was no connection between the level of reported benefits and sustainability practice outcomes. The evidence in my thesis, therefore, complicates the theory that participants might be swapping unsustainable practices for social capital in the context of community activities (Jackson and Marks, 1999; Pennington and Rydin, 2000).

The explanation of ‘what change occurs’ (see Figure 8.1) above could be reinterpreted to support the ‘benefits exchange’ theory. I found here that the cohesiveness of a community-based organisation impacts on its members’ sustainability practices. This was noted because the community-based organisations that were seen to be very cohesive (the Women’s Institute and Green Gym Reddish Vale) by their members reported a high level of sustainability practice change. This is not necessarily a consistent pattern however. The high levels of personal benefits
experienced at the Green Gym in Wakefield, along with rather low sustainability practice changes among members of this group, suggest that there is no simple relationship here. This issue needs to be addressed more extensively in future research, but the uncovering of a more complex relationship between involvement in community sustainability projects and wellbeing is an important subsidiary contribution of this thesis.

Note that the idea of a benefit exchange is a rather instrumental one, given that it supposes that a participant has to have something in return for her membership of a voluntary organisation. Dobson’s work on ecological citizenship adds an interesting slant to my thesis findings, in its consideration of the concept of ‘virtue’ with regards sustainability practice (Dobson, 2003). He argues, from a political theory perspective, that ecological citizens (a term broadly akin to sustainable consumers) can be understood merely as virtuous in their choice to act for the common good. Certainly, some of the participants I have interviewed as part of this thesis did not seem to gain personally from their involvement, and were motivated to be involved because it seemed the ‘right thing to do’. Again, I would imagine that Dobson’s ‘virtue’ theory would hold true in some cases, and not in others. A more subtle picture of people’s motivation for volunteering on sustainability, perhaps one that includes both ‘benefits exchange’ and ‘virtue’ theories, needs to be developed in future research.

8.5 Implications for community sustainability

In the literature review I summarised various perspectives on the role of community in governing sustainability practices (see 2.3.2). Having presented and analysed the extensive data collected for this thesis, it is interesting to return to these perspectives to see how well they map on to the experience of my respondents and in the light of my analysis. In retrospect, the different perspectives that I identified in the literature provide pieces of a puzzle, which can be combined to provide a means of understanding the role of community-based organisations. My theories of ‘what change occurs’ and ‘how change occurs’ add to that broader understanding of the role of community in sustainability. Given that this thesis took the form of an empirical exploration of a particular instance of community for sustainability, many questions about this relationship remain, however. To finish this chapter, then, I will revisit perspectives on community governance in sustainability from the literature in the light of my data. In doing so I will comment more broadly on the overarching concern of the thesis: the role of community-based organisations in stimulating their members to take on sustainability practices. I will also consider the nature of my own theoretical contribution in the light of the literature in this area.

First, the instrumental perspective on the role of community-based organisations (which frames these organisations as a partner in implementing government policy) is rather
problematic in its assumptions (see for instance McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; UK Government, 2005). It assumes, for instance, that there is a common vision on sustainability, that implementing sustainability practice is therefore uncontroversial, and that resources are available within a community to maintain sustainability projects. Two examples from my data work strongly against these assumptions. The conflict experienced in the Holy Trinity case shows that sustainability is by no means an uncontroversial goal throughout these organisations. While these projects can improve the standing of sustainability issues within the community, volunteers can face a considerable counter-culture as in the Holy Trinity case (4.3). At the Green Gym in Reddish Vale, BTCV’s arguably instrumental ambitions for the gym to become self-sustainable (run entirely by volunteers) were confounded by a lack of willingness by individuals in the group to take on leadership. The BTCV was over optimistic about the capacity for leadership in this group, and in association the capacity for change in line with its own agenda. In effect, the BTCV failed to take into consideration that the resources available in the community did not really match the work that it required (4.4.2). The main problem with an instrumentalist viewpoint is that it takes the community and its members for granted as a resource for a specific vision of sustainability, something I saw to be problematic in the case studies I explored. It does so because it frames the agency of the community-based organisations as the stimulus for change. There are echoes of the critique of sustainable consumption for ‘individualism’ here: indeed in the instrumentalist perspective instead of shifting the responsibility to the consumer, government shifts the responsibility to the community (see Maniates, 2002; Southerton et al., 2004b on consumption and responsibility).

I would also argue that the idea of ‘relocalisation’ (community as a means of bypassing failing market and state processes) is also rather agency-oriented in its understanding of change (see for instance McCarthy, 2005; Hopkins, 2008). In Chapter 4, I found that community-based organisations drew extensively on their social context (the existing infrastructure, culture and organisations) to promote practice change. This social context inevitably included national and regional government and private sector organisations and influences. In addition, many of the local organisations I looked at had a hierarchical structure to draw on which was invaluable for supporting their activities. So, for instance, the Women’s Institute groups I studied drew on funding from Defra, Global Action Plan’s Ecoteams programme and guidance from the national federation (4.5). Meanwood School used resources available in local government to assist the creation of a walking bus (4.2). The embedded nature of these organisations and their participants means that, while their own agency is important, they are always partly reliant on, or influenced by, state and market processes.
The ‘deliberative and inclusionary processes’ perspective is usually applied to decision-making processes on sustainability within communities, but I pointed out in the literature review that this could potentially be connected back to practice change. The idea that people may practice differently as a result of increased political engagement in sustainability was raised, as was the idea of community being an arena for participation in sustainability (Agyeman, 2003). There are several problems with using such an idea to explain my data. First, I found that very few participants reported any change in political empowerment as a result of these projects (see 6.3.6). This may have been because some of my cases were framed in an explicitly ‘a-political’ way (Bollington, Holy Trinity, Women’s Institute). Using Dobson’s wider conception of ecological citizenship, which includes citizenly action in the private sphere may be helpful here, although most participants still do not frame their home activities as political (Dobson, 2003).

There is a further problem here, which is one that is also recognised in the wider literature on participatory processes (see for instance Rydin and Pennington, 2000). These projects are strictly ‘inclusionary’, in the sense that they are open to all, but in reality only certain types of participant are active in these projects (see 5.3). As we saw, for most projects these are typical volunteers: middle aged, well educated, with time on their hands. There were some exceptions here (especially at the Green Gym in Wakefield), but it would be wrong to consider this as an ‘arena for participation’ without noting that not everyone participates. In a way, the ‘deliberative and inclusionary processes’ perspective fails to capture the diversity of participants (some of whom are not interested in political participation) or the limits to diversity of participants (many are traditional volunteers) in these processes.

One of the more fruitful perspectives on community in sustainability is that which stems from the literature on social, and other, capitals (see for instance Carr, 2000; Rydin and Pennington, 2000; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Evans et al., 2004). In the literature review, I came up with the concept of ‘community capacity’ by combining elements of the literature which suggest that communities need to draw on a series of resources (social, institutional, material etc.) in order to stimulate sustainability. This is both drawn on and supported in my work in Figure 8.2. I do not claim here that the resources and rules of a community need to be of a certain character to ensure sustainability outcomes can be achieved; indeed the communities I looked at were very different (see Table 3.5) and had access to very different resources as a result. I have tried instead to build an understanding of how rules and resources are used in these different cases, and which kinds of resources have an impact on the participants’ sustainability practices. The characterisation of resources into infrastructural, organisational and personal, alongside cultural rules has strong links with the literature on ‘capital’ in sustainability (Carr, 2000; Rydin and Pennington, 2000; Robbins and Rowe, 2002; Evans et al., 2004).
Seyfang and Smith’s idea of community action on sustainability as a niche activity, as part of transitions theory, is also interesting in relation to this study (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Here, the authors conceptualise community as an opportunity for experimentation with new practices, something which certainly rings true in my work. For instance, in the mechanisms chapter we saw members ‘learning by example’: absorbing a new practice in their community-based organisation which they then took on themselves in their home (see 7.2.4). There is also a link here with the idea in transitions theory that the ‘niche’ can eventually become the ‘mainstream’ (ibid.). Some of the projects under study here did indeed seem to be attempting to ‘mainstream’ their work. The Women’s Institute projects, for instance, amounted to what Seyfang would call a ‘replication’ of Ecoteam activities around the country in those groups that were willing to undertake the task (Seyfang, 2009). The activities under study at Meanwood School were institutionally replicated by Leeds City Council, which provided facilities to allow for such sustainability practice projects to take place. In a sense the walking bus idea was already mainstream, and this may partly explain the loss of an explicit connection with environment that I saw at Meanwood School. More bottom-up projects such as Bollington and Holy Trinity would be more difficult to explain in these terms, although Bollington was conceived as a replication of the Ashton Hayes project.

So where do all these perspectives from the literature, and my own work in this thesis, leave us with regards our understanding of the role of community in sustainability? I would argue that there is still some way to go before a coherent vision of community and sustainability practice emerges. Some key lessons emerge from my own work in the light of the literature, however. First, if we combine elements of the instrumental and relocalisation perspectives with the idea of community capacity, we come up with a vision similar to that presented in Figure 8.2. Here, change is capacitated by the structure of community but also reliant on initiation by agents (people or organisations) within that community. This allows for a context-specific, and I would argue a more realistic, vision of community sustainability, which understands how the presence of different rules and resources within a community affects the potential for agency. My framing of these kinds of initiatives in terms of how they draw on and create rules and resources, leads me to question what rules and resources for sustainability practice exist in the broader community. I think an important question is raised for the future here: what is it about the community, beyond the community-based organisation, which allows for sustainability practices to emerge?

Second, several of the perspectives above talk of benefits emerging from the coming together of sustainability and community (in particular the inclusionary processes perspective and the ‘community capacity’ perspective). The story here appears to be complex. Just as
‘benefits exchange’ was not a universal means of explaining voluntary action for sustainability, neither does the idea that people will become more politically engaged through volunteering offer a holistic enough explanation. Indeed, the complexity of these projects is both their strength and weakness, as the projects I studied resulted in a range of positive outcomes but, as a result, are difficult to categorise as successful by each specific goal. So, on the one hand, only four participants interviewed for my thesis (n=4/45) reported no change in sustainability practice, and no benefits from involvement in their community-based organisation (see Table 6.9). If these projects were measured according to broad sustainability criteria they met considerable success, as most of the participants experienced either change to sustainability practice or some other benefits from involvement (which included, for instance, increases in community cohesion or personal wellbeing). On the other hand, changes to both sustainability practice and the social cohesion of the community were very different case by case. This adds up to a rather inconsistent picture, and although I have found ways of explaining these inconsistencies in Figure 8.1 above, an instrumentalist perspective might dismiss these initiatives as rather unreliable in their delivery of specific goals. To truly appreciate the effects of these initiatives we need to move away from understanding their effects on one aspect of sustainability (e.g. political engagement, social cohesion) and embrace the more complex reality that these projects represent.

8.6 Conclusions

In this chapter I have summarised the contribution of this thesis to understanding by outlining the main findings and relating them back to the literature. I presented two models in relation to the thesis topic: firstly a model of ‘what change occurs’ and secondly a model of ‘how change occurs’. These two models related back to the specific literature on this kind of intervention, as well as the more general literature on sustainable consumption, and practice theory. I also discussed the role of additional outcomes in creating practice change, relating back to literature on wellbeing in sustainable consumption. Finally, I framed my results in the larger literature on community sustainability, discussing the merits and shortfalls of various ways of looking at community sustainability in the light of my data, and proposing a broader focus for research in the future.
The role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practices among participants
9 Conclusion

9.1 Contributions of this thesis

In the introduction to this thesis I claimed two sets of contributions. The first set of contributions were topic-based, and related to increasing both empirical and theoretical understandings of the role of community-based organisations in encouraging participants to change their sustainability practices (1 and 2 below). The second set of contributions amounted to an extension of research on the links between social and environmental concepts (3 and 4 below). To start this conclusion, contributions of my thesis are listed in turn, with a comment on where the particular contribution is found within the thesis:

Contribution 1: This thesis offers an evidence base for understanding the role of community-based organisations in encouraging participants to change their sustainability practices.

The empirical contributions of this thesis can be found in Chapters 4-7, in particular in the extensive results sections at the beginning of each of these chapters. Within these chapters, my contributions included a description of the context of the community-based organisations I studied (Chapter 4). Here I found that the capacity for these projects to change their participants’ practices is bounded by their social context, which I defined in terms of the cultural rules and organisational, infrastructural and personal resources to which the projects had access. I also explored the background of participants with regards their sustainability practice history and volunteering practices (Chapter 5). I found that in the five cases I studied participants had a range of sustainability practice histories and a range of volunteering practices, and that the two were not linked (active volunteers do not necessarily have a history of sustainability practice). I then documented the changes in sustainability practice and the additional outcomes that participants reported (Chapter 6). Here I noted a range of different outcomes, both in terms of sustainability practice, and in additional outcomes. Finally, I explained how participants accounted for change in practice (Chapter 7). Here I brought together a list of mechanisms which amount to the explanations that participants gave for their change in practice, all of which involve the actions of the community-based organisation and the reaction of the participant.

Contribution 2: This thesis offers an explanation of the role of community-based organisations in the light of existing theoretical and empirical research on sustainable consumption.
The theoretical contributions were built on in the course of the thesis, starting with the analysis sections of Chapters 4-7, and culminating in the explanations of what change occurs (Figure 8.1) and how change occurs (Figure 8.2) in Chapter 8. I also drew on my exploration of practice theory in the literature review (see 2.2.2). In Chapter 4, I explained how the social context in which community-based organisations were active on sustainability affected their capacity to act. This involved categorising the different rules and resources (cultural, organisational, infrastructural and personal) that affect the capacity of these kinds of projects with reference to the practice theory literature. In providing an account of how participants started the process of involvement (Chapter 5), I was able to explain how that affected the outcomes that they reported in Chapter 6. Here I linked the participant’s history of sustainability practice, their involvement in the community-based organisation, the cohesiveness of the community-based organisation and the nature of the activities in question using these factors to explain the intensity of sustainability practice change for participants. This is summarised in the first theoretical diagram in Chapter 8 (Figure 8.1) which shows the relationship between intensity of change and all of these factors. In Chapter 7, I explained how both structure and agency play a part in changing practices in the interaction of community-based organisation and participant. This work, and the contribution from Chapter 4, is summarised in the second theoretical diagram in Chapter 8 (Figure 8.2) which shows how the elements of social context and the consciousness of the participant work together to change sustainability practice.

As well as these more direct contributions I have made some more general contributions in this study, contributions that can mainly be found in the discussion chapter (Chapter 8). Here, I expanded the use of practice theory in studying sustainable consumption, especially in my theoretical contribution of part 8.3 on ‘how change occurs’, marking the third contribution:

**Contribution 3:** This thesis expands the frame of sociological studies in sustainable consumption to integrate internal aspects into explanations of practice, and to examine changes in practice, rather than practice as it stands.

For clarity here, my expansion of the use of practice theory in sustainable consumption included two elements: first integrating agency elements into explanations of change (discursive and practical consciousness) using practice theory concepts, and second applying practice theory to an attempt to deliberately change practice.

**Contribution 4:** This thesis tests and expands the understanding of the relationship between concepts of community and sustainability practice.

My fourth contribution involved exploring the relationship between the concepts of community and sustainability practice (see 8.5 on ‘implications for community sustainability’).
Chapter 9: Conclusion

Here I found that in the light of my data some of the existing links that have been drawn between the two topics are rather over-simplistic, tending to show just one element of the relationship between community and sustainability and as such lacking a coherent vision of the whole.

9.2 Policy and practical recommendations

Community-based initiatives on sustainability were never going to revolutionise sustainability practice on their own. Neither would many sustainable consumption measures, and the tendency to look for one-size-fits-all solutions in sustainable consumption is unhelpful, given the variety of existing practices and values among citizens. This perhaps relates back to the disciplinary origins of sustainable consumption research, where in some disciplines there is a tendency to focus on one mechanism for change. One of the benefits of taking a practice theory approach here was that it opened up the possibility of a broader set of mechanisms, and took the understanding of to whom each mechanism applies as a central concern. So, in this thesis, I found that only certain types of people will join community-based organisations (volunteers with time on their hands) and therefore that substantial portions of the population are not affected by these initiatives. This makes an instrumentalist attitude to these kinds of interventions (as discussed in 2.3.2) rather naive: community-based organisations can reach some parts of the population, but should not be expected to reach far beyond their membership. In addition, there is no doubt that the practices of some types of people, who will never be members of these kinds of organisations, will have to be targeted by other means. The range of sustainability practice histories that participants presented struck a more positive note: while the people affected by these initiatives were all volunteers they were by no means all previously engaged in sustainability practices. As such, these initiatives did represent progress in terms of reinforcing or changing practices overall. In addition, I found that there are considerable (and different) gains to be made for participants with different sustainability practice histories, by engaging them in community sustainability projects. Hopefully, the critical understanding of the role of community-based organisations in stimulating sustainability practice that comes out of this research can help to inform policy makers’ and practitioners’ work in this area.

By spelling out ‘what change occurs’ in the context of community-based organisations’ projects on sustainability (Figure 8.1), I have started to create an evidence base for policy makers and practitioners in this area. This part of my theoretical contribution explains the contexts in which participants in these processes report changes in sustainability practice, and can help practitioners and policy makers to focus their efforts in attempts to change practices. Equally, by explaining ‘how change occurs’, I have created a model, based on practice theory, of how sustainability practice can be affected by community-based organisations (Figure 8.2). This
theory of factors affecting sustainability practice offers a way of thinking about the limits and potential of the types of intervention under study in this thesis. It could be used as a starting point for policy makers and practitioners thinking about resourcing these kinds of intervention. In the cases I have studied, community-based organisations mobilised the resources and rules of the community to create change among participants. All the structural factors (rules and resources) that I identified here could be enhanced using policy interventions. For instance, ‘people resources’ could be made more powerful by offering training and support for volunteers in key areas. In addition, from a practitioner point of view, this model could be used as a way of identifying the resources available, and the rules that persist in a community-based organisation, in order to grasp how these resources can be mobilised in a specific context, and what boundaries there might be to change.

So what does my research mean for a community-based organisation setting off on a sustainability project? My recommendations for these groups are again based on the models put forward in Chapter 8. From the first model (Figure 8.1), I can say that if a community group has an objective of changing member practices, they should take certain steps. First, they should bear in mind that people with a variety of sustainability practice histories are involved in these kinds of projects, and while there is more to be gained in changing unengaged members’ practice there are always improvements that more historically engaged participants can make. Second, they should understand that actively involved members are more likely to be moved to change than peripherally involved members, and as such they could design their activities to actively engage as many as possible. Third, practice change is more likely in a cohesive community-based organisation than a divided one. This may be rather difficult to engineer if an organisation is inherently divided, but a divided community-based organisation might want to put effort into consensus-building before attempting to change sustainability practices, or merely to explicitly address those in the organisation that are open to change. Fourth, sustainability practice change should be addressed head on by the activities of the organisation, rather than obliquely through more general sustainability activities. In addition, my second model (Figure 8.2) should reveal to community-based organisations that providing rules and resources is their part of stimulating change, but the participant also has to play a part. Just changing rules and resources will not guarantee practice change, which is probably a helpful insight for those working in this difficult area.

There are some important further implications in this second model (Figure 8.2) for policy on sustainable consumption. Given their relative lack of power within a community, the efforts of community-based organisations have a limited capacity to change the structural factors that they access in communities. So, to continue the previous example, for instance, community-
based organisations may have limited capacity to provide training for their own volunteers. To increase capacity, these organisations could be supported more consistently by other players. For instance, local or national government could offer more resources, or find ways of increasing community-based organisations’ resources. Some government based initiatives in this area already exist, but considering that some of the community-based organisations in this thesis currently deliver this kind of sustainability practice change mainly from their own resources (especially the Holy Trinity case), further research should investigate whether the level of provisioning from the public purse, and other kinds of non-material support, is adequate. Certainly some of the projects I have studied for this thesis experienced difficulties in accessing and maintaining funds to support activities (Green Gym).

### 9.3 Recommendations for further research

While my research provides an evidence base for the role of communities in promoting sustainable consumption, it also opens up a series of questions for future research. The role of community in sustainability is still an emerging area of interest in research terms. In empirical terms, there is room for research that looks at the contexts for and outcomes of these initiatives across larger numbers of community-based organisations. Qualitative research on other cases of community-based change may also be able to expand the list of mechanisms I have found in my research. Now that I have looked extensively at the ‘micro’ level of these initiatives, it would also be interesting to take a ‘meso’ approach, by examining the support available for these kinds of initiatives within communities, potentially using my ‘how change happens’ framework as a starting point. Equally, a ‘macro’ perspective could look at how these kinds of organisations can be supported by policy regimes, and in the context of specific national cultures.

One of the further questions arising from my research is how other structures in the community influence resident practices. This question emerged from my data analysis, as participants regularly talked about the limits to their practice being related to the provisioning of services or facilities within the community. Again the framework developed in Figure 8.2 would be a useful starting point. Studies of sustainable consumption, to my knowledge, have not considered how place more generally affects practice. While there is some recognition that lifestyles affect practice, tying these lifestyles to places could be a useful way of understanding how to change practices. So, for instance: how does living in a particular type of place affect someone’s capacity to take on sustainability practices, and how can that capacity be enhanced in the context of that place?

Another intriguing avenue relates to the ‘complementary ethos’ type of participant, who takes on sustainability practices in connection with a related set of values. These people seem to
be reframing their personal narratives (of ‘waste-not’ or ‘outdoors-type’) in the light of community-based sustainability projects, as narratives that are compatible with the story of sustainability. Exploring how people explain their involvement in sustainability, or their ‘narratives’ of sustainability, could be a way of understanding how new sections of the population can be engaged in sustainability practices. It would also be interesting to relate these narratives to the level of sustainability practice that a person engages in.

Finally, I would like to comment on the room for sociological research in the study of sustainability. Until now, sociology has made a rather low-key contribution to the study of sustainability, particularly in comparison with disciplines such as economics. My thesis shows that there is some real potential for greater contribution from sociology, in particular in understanding and evaluating solutions to sustainability, and in using existing theories and methodologies with which to approach these tricky issues. Sustainable consumption issues look very different when approached from a sociological perspective, and this can only be a positive addition to understanding in this field. The realistic evaluation methodology I have used is an example of this, as, for instance, its ontological assumption that interventions will not affect all types of participant could be usefully applied elsewhere in sustainability policy research. I think that sociology also offers a genuine opportunity to integrate ‘social’ concepts (including community) into sustainability. Effectively, a sociological approach results in a different understanding of the sustainability problem, which can be useful in an area where change in practice is difficult to achieve. Certainly, the range of solutions to sustainability problems is increased by the involvement of a new discipline in understanding what such solutions could be.

9.4 Reflections on process

This thesis began as an interdisciplinary approach to a sustainability topic which, as I have discussed, incorporates many contributions from different disciplines. Through the process of the research, my work has gradually centred around the discipline of sociology. I was drawn to sociology for several reasons, but mainly because it allowed me to convincingly theorise the role of community in constructing practice. In retrospect, the process of the thesis could have been much easier if I had avoided interdisciplinarity from the outset. Evidently this was not an option in a topic area which has contributions from so many disciplines, and neither was it an option for me working in an interdisciplinary department with only minor sociological interests. In addition, by fixing on one sociological theory (practice theory) I am perhaps losing some of the richness of other disciplinary contributions. This particularly applies to psychological contributions to the understanding of the inner workings of participants’ ‘consciousness’, which were only peripherally integrated here. Given that this is an empirically based doctoral project,
the time I had to dedicate to integrating psychological and sociological theories was relatively limited, but I hope to address this theoretical challenge in the future. The tensions inherent in doing interdisciplinary research make up one of the limitations of this study.

At the centre of every research project dealing with social change there is also a tension between quantity and quality of data. My thesis is no exception. While I have been able to successfully explore why and how participants change as a result of community-based sustainability initiatives, I have not come to a quantitative conclusion about exactly how much change participants experience as a result of involvement in these activities. There are several reasons for this, associated with the diverse and disconnected nature of these kinds of organisations (there is no ‘index’ of community-based initiatives working on sustainability) and the necessity of purposive sampling as a result. In addition, the relative paucity of evidence on the community sector with regards to sustainability made any measurement of change rather difficult from the beginning, as it was not clear what changes should be measured. Quantitative measures of change rely on a qualitative evidence base allowing the researcher to make sensible assumptions about what outcomes there might be, which was not present at the beginning of the project (see 2.4).

The strategy I used to organise the process of research, the Realistic Evaluation strategy, was a highly useful structuring device for my research, and a strategy that I would recommend to others working on sustainability issues (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The strategy permeates my thesis, which relies on its understanding of the purpose of evaluation research, the key concepts that it uses to explain change (context, mechanism, outcome) and the causal model that its use implies. In my research, Realistic Evaluation allowed flexibility (not dictating or ruling-out specific methods), and promoted rigour (encouraging both depth and breadth in the study of a phenomenon). In addition it fitted very well with a practice theory approach, given its belief in the embedded nature of social change and its concern with both context (structure) and mechanisms (agency). In the context of my thesis, it was rather difficult to fulfil the whole agenda of Realistic Evaluation: the aim to explain ‘what works, for whom, under which circumstances’. Indeed, Pawson and Tilley might argue that I have only started to explain ‘what works’, given the relatively small and purposively drawn sample in my thesis. Despite this, the Realistic Evaluation strategy provided a rigorous and holistic means of researching social change, which proved a useful starting point for studying an intervention that was until now rather under-researched. I hope to use the strategy again in the future.
9.5 Final thoughts

While I set out to find ‘best case’ initiatives as part of this research, the projects that I have researched should be understood as the best instances of community-based change in a policy context which is not particularly conducive. This is for several reasons, including, in my view, because funding and support in this area of policy is rather half-hearted, and not currently encouraging of genuinely local change. Any support that the organisations under study gleaned from government or other organisations was either instigated by the skills and efforts of the community-based organisation (witness Bollington’s efforts to make links with local stakeholders) or by entry in a highly competitive funding processes, again based on existing skills and resources (witness Women’s Institute national office securing Environmental Action Fund money). Intense competition is typified by the current round of funding in this area from national government. The Greener Living Fund will give just £6 million to around 10 national organisations to promote community-based change (Defra, 2009), a process from which smaller, more local organisations are excluded. The rather low levels of funding here are disappointing, especially given that Defra’s own Environmental Action Fund evaluation showed very positive outcomes for these kinds of initiatives (Defra, 2008a). The Green Gyms initiatives, which were funded by local government, may represent a way forward as sustainability issues are raised up the agenda for local authorities. Funding for the Green Gym was marked by an instrumentalist approach, however, and the profusion of goals attached to the initiative were difficult for gyms to achieve.

There is a wider issue here: the difficulty of promoting sustainable living in the context of unsustainable infrastructures of provision and a culture of consumerism (related to the infrastructural resources and cultural rules outlined in Chapter 4). From the perspective of the community-based organisation it is difficult to see the point of maintaining activities on sustainability when national government approves a third runway at Heathrow, and when the way out of the current recession is conceptualised as an increase in spending (resulting no doubt in increased resource use). Equally, if voluntary efforts to promote change are not supported with sustainable infrastructures, it is difficult both to maintain sustainability practices and to feel that these practices are truly valued and not a tokenistic nod to a superficial sustainability agenda. Certainly, the frustration that my respondents expressed at the lack of a supportive infrastructure for sustainability practices (6.3.5) is evidence of the importance of the social context for sustainability in making interventions by community-based organisations work. While these organisations can provide leadership in their own communities, that can be difficult
to maintain in the face of a society that has not yet embraced concepts of sustainability, never mind integrated these concepts into the fabric of daily life.

To end on a more positive note, the process of doing this research has been highly inspiring. The momentum for change in this arena seems to be coming from the voluntary and community sector (see for instance initiatives run by Global Action Plan, 2006; National Federation of Women's Institutes, 2008; Transition Towns Network, 2008; NESTA, 2009; World Wildlife Fund, 2009). This is a positive sign that the third sector is engaging of its own volition in community-based change, and there is a plethora of community-based projects on sustainability emerging around the country to evidence this. Admittedly, more efforts (for instance by local authorities) in seeking out and supporting community activity would be useful, as would a clearer vision of how (local) government can help to support such activities. In the course of my studies, however, I have met individuals from all walks of life who are inspired to take action in their private lives to change both their own practices and those of their fellow participants. I have also come into contact with community-based organisations which show real determination to change the world into a better place. This demonstration of voluntary self-organisation and self-transformation, in the name of sustainability, is a powerful reminder of the capacity for leadership and creativity of individuals and communities.
10 References


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References


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11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1: Practitioner interview protocol

Give brief introduction to research, including topic; previous cases; relevance to government and environmental change; what’s in it for them.
Distribute leaflets on research, and distribute question list for this interview.

1. About [the community-based organisation]

I would like some background information on [the organisation]. Could you tell me a bit more about it?

- History
- Goals
- Core activities
- Current challenges
- Ethos
- Number and description of members

2. About [the project]

How did [the project] come about?
What are the main goals of [the project]?
What activities have taken place under [this project]?
How does [the project] fit in with other [CB Org] activities? (conflicting/complementary features)

3. About [the group]

Who are the people most heavily involved in [this project] and what do they do?
Who else is involved in [the project], what do different people do?
How many were involved in total?

4. Effects of [the project]

What do you think were the effects of the project?
  - On people involved
  - On environment
  - On social life within the organisation
  - On the organisation more generally
  - Other
Why do you think each of these effects were achieved?

5. Experience of [the project]

What kind of experience has this [project] been for [the organisation]: positive/negative?
Can you explain?

6. Further information

Do you know of any other information available that may be of use to me? (e.g. documents in your archive)
### 11.2 Appendix 2: Whole group questionnaire (Holy Trinity)

3 September 2006

This questionnaire is part of a research project at Leeds University into the influence of community-based organisations on individuals’ environmental and ethical actions and choices. The questionnaire aims to find out more about your involvement in fair trade and environmental activities at Holy Trinity and at home. It should take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

For information: the survey refers to the Christian Ecology Group at Holy Trinity. You may be aware that the Christian Ecology Group has run environmental and fair trade activities in association with the church, including a Fair Trade Fashion Show, and a conference on Earth Care Day in 2004. The group is also behind the Green Pages publication provided on the internet and in booklet form, the fair trade stalls that you see in the spring and autumn in the church, and the use of fair trade coffee and tea at the church refectory. Holy Trinity recently won an Eco-congregation award (2005) in connection with this work.

1. How often do you attend church services at Holy Trinity, Skipton?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The following statements refer to your involvement in Holy Trinity and Christian Ecology Group activities. Please tick next to any of the statements that apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I attended the Fair Trade Fashion show in 2006.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attended the harvest festival service last year (2005) at which the Eco-congregation award was presented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attended the Earth Care Day conference in 2004.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have bought Fair Trade tea or coffee in the refectory at Holy Trinity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have bought Fair Trade products from the stalls set up at Holy Trinity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since attending the Fair Trade fashion show I have bought an item of clothing that was fairly traded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used Green Pages to find ethical or eco-friendly products in Skipton.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used Green Pages to find ways of disposing of waste in Skipton.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I planted a tree in 2003 with the Church Ecology Group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The following statements refer to your involvement in fundraising or organisation for the Christian Ecology Group activities. Please tick next to any of the statements that apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I helped to fundraise for the Fair Trade Fashion show or Earth Care Day conference (e.g. baked a cake).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I donated money towards the Fair Trade Fashion Show, Earth Care Day conference or Tree-planting event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I helped out at the Fair Trade Fashion show, Earth Care Day conference, or Fair Trade stalls.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attended a Christian Ecology Group meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I helped to organise the Fair Trade Fashion show, or Earth Care Day conference.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. How often, if at all, have you done each of the following in the last 12 months?  
*(Please tick one box in each row as appropriate)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Less Frequently</th>
<th>Once in the past 12 months</th>
<th>Not done in the past 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recycled materials (e.g. paper, bottles, plastic)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled electronics (e.g. mobile phone, computer)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought to support local shops/suppliers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen a product or service on a company’s responsible reputation</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided a product or service because of a company’s behaviour</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively campaigned about an environmental/social issue</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. The next stage of this research is to carry out one-to-one interviews with members of the congregation exploring some of the issues raised above in more detail. Would you be happy to be interviewed as part of this project?  Yes □  No □  
Please enter your phone number and/or email address if you are happy to be interviewed, and I will be in touch in the coming weeks. Interviews will be arranged at your convenience.  
NB: all contact information that you provide here will be kept confidential, and will only be used for the purposes of this research.  
Name: ________________________________  
Phone number (daytime): ________________________________  
Email address (if possible): ________________________________  
Thank you very much for your help in filling in this questionnaire. With any queries or comments on this research please contact Lucie Middlemiss from the University of Leeds at: lucie@env.leeds.ac.uk or 0113 343 7432.
11.3 Appendix 3: Participant interview protocol (Women’s Institute version)

Opening

Introduction to Research Project:
I am a researcher at the University of Leeds. I am interested in finding out what it is like to be involved in a community project such as the Women’s Institute’s Ecoteams project, and what the effects of involvement are on your everyday decisions regarding environmental and ethical actions. The main thing we are going to do today is talk about your involvement in this project and its effects on you. At the end of the interview I will also ask you to fill in a questionnaire. I’ve written a few more details about my research in this leaflet and you can keep a copy if you like. Have you got any more questions about the research for now?

Some comments about the process:
I would like to record the interview on mini disk so that I can listen to it in detail later. I won’t let anyone else listen to the recording. Is that ok? [TURN ON MINIDISK]. The interview is confidential, and you will not be named in any research report that I write, but I may use your words in the report. Is that ok? Try to ignore the recording, and please take your time in answering. Please ask if you don’t understand anything that I am asking.

I Project and group context
Can you tell me more about your involvement with the WI and with the Ecoteam?
Need to cover:
- Involvement in WI
- Involvement in Ecoteam
- Motivation to participate

II Contextual information on individual
a. Were you interested in environmental and ethical issues before you joined the Ecoteam?
   - Knowledge
   - Attitudes
   - Behaviour

b. Are you involved in any other activities in the community?
   - Any involvement in other community-based orgs
   - Any other voluntary activities/work (i.e. participatory democracy/ service provision/campaigning)
   - Any other environmental or ethical projects?
Extent of involvement in each case

III Environmental change as a result of the project
a. Did you make any changes in your environmental actions while you were involved with WI Ecoteam activities?
Discuss specific changes or lack of changes that came about in detail.
- Rubbish,
- gas and electricity use,
- water use,
- transport habits,
- shopping habits.
If yes for each:
Can you explain to me how that change came about?
Was the change influenced by your membership of the Ecoteam? If yes, what was it about the Ecoteam that made you take on the change?
Can you see yourself continuing to act in this changed way?

If no for each:
Did you consider changing this at home? (why/why not?)

b. Did your awareness of environmental issues change during your involvement in the Ecoteam?
   If yes for each:
   Can you explain to me how that change came about?
   Was the change influenced by your membership of the Ecoteam? If yes, what was it about the Ecoteam that made you take on the change?
   If no for each:
   Can you explain why there was no change?

c. Did your attitudes towards environmental issues change during your involvement in the Ecoteam?
   If yes for each:
   Can you explain to me how that change came about?
   Was the change influenced by your membership of the Ecoteam? If yes, what was it about the Ecoteam that made you take on the change?
   If no for each:
   Can you explain why there was no change?

IV Other impacts of the project
Did the Ecoteam have any other effects on your life?
Need to cover:
- Health changes (mental or physical)
- Social changes
- Skills development
- Knowledge development
- Way time is spent
- Financial implications
- Political engagement
- OTHER

V The individual’s experience of the project
a. How would you describe the experience of being involved in the Ecoteam?
   Need to cover:
   - Positives
   - Negatives

b. Will you continue your membership of the group?

[STRUCTURED QUESTIONS ASKED HERE]

VI Theory question:
People think that activities like the Ecoteam within groups like the WI can help to encourage people to take on more environmental behaviours. Do you agree?

Closing
**Structured questions**

*Interview Reference Number: ________ Case Study Number: ________*

**Background information**

1. **Gender:**
   *(please tick as appropriate)*
   - Female
   - Male

2. Please tick against the age range that includes your age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Ticks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Please state the composition of your household (including yourself):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Ticks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your work and education**

4. What is the highest educational qualification that you hold?
   *(please tick as appropriate)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Ticks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or equivalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCE A Level equivalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent (O levels)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. What is your working situation?
   *(please tick against any terms that describe your status)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Ticks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working part time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working full time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Family worker (carer or parent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What is your occupation?
   *(please write below)*

---------------------------------------------------------------------
7. Please tick against the income range that includes your household income (your income combined with that of any other wage earners in your household):

- Up to £15,000
- £15,000 to £25,000
- £25,000 to £35,000
- £35,000 to £45,000
- £45,000 to £55,000
- more than £55,000

**You and your community**

8. How long have you lived in your present neighbourhood?

Number of years

9. Do you have family who live nearby?

- Yes
- No

10. Would you say this area is a place where neighbours look after each other or not?

- Yes, is a place where neighbours look after each other
- No, is not a place where neighbours look after each other
- Neither

11. Would you say that you trust…

(please tick as appropriate)

- Most of the people in your neighbourhood
- Many of the people in your neighbourhood
- A few of the people in your neighbourhood
- Or that you do not trust people in your neighbourhood

12. Overall, do you like living in this neighbourhood?

- Yes
- No
- Don’t know

**Participation**

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“By working together, people in my neighbourhood can influence decisions that affect the neighbourhood.”

(please tick as appropriate)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don’t have an opinion
14. Are you currently a member of any of the following organisations? 
(Please tick all appropriate)

- Political party
- Trade unions
- Environmental group
- Parents' / School Association
- Tenants' / Residents’ group or Neighbourhood Watch
- Religious group or church organisation
- Voluntary services group
- Pensioners group / organisation
- Scouts / Guides organisation
- Professional organisation
- Other community or civic group (give details)
- Social club / working men’s club
- Sports club
- Women’s Institute / Townswomen’s Guild
- Women’s Group / Feminist organisation
- Other group or organisation (give details)
- None

Other: please give details as necessary: _____________________________

Opinions
15. Please tick one of the options to tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Government should improve the quality of life for the people in the United Kingdom rather than other countries&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There is little connection between the protection of the environment and people’s quality of life.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Prices and jobs today are more important than protecting the environment for the future.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is important to build new roads to relieve traffic congestion even if some countryside is lost.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The benefits of growing genetically modified crops which require less chemical pesticides are greater than the risks.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices

Environmental actions
16. This is a list of actions which you might take at home. Please tick one of the options to tell me whether you (or your household) have done it in the last 12 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmenal actions</th>
<th>On a regular basis</th>
<th>Once or on a few occasions</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliberately used public transport, walked or cycled instead of a car?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut down the use of a car for short journeys (e.g. to school, work, local shop etc)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken glass to a bottle bank or separated glass from rubbish so it could be collected for recycling?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made compost out of kitchen waste?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut down the amount of electricity/gas your household uses?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken cans to a can-bank or separated cans from rubbish so they could be collected for recycling?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut down on use of water?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken paper to a paper-bank or separated paper from rubbish so that it could be collected for recycling?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done things to encourage wildlife in your garden?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken plastic to a recycling facility or separated plastic from rubbish so that it could be collected for recycling?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a concentrated washing powder, or concentrated liquid or tablets in your washing machine?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought toilet rolls or kitchen towels made from recycled paper?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen a water-based gloss paint, rather than solvent-based paint for decorating?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decided not to buy a particular product because it seemed to have too much packaging?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bought organically produced food?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used low energy light bulbs in the home?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.4 Appendix 4: Publication related to this thesis

The following publication is attached to the thesis: