Power and community in Scottish community land initiatives

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Power and community in
Scottish community land initiatives

A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Aberdeen

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2014
Declaration

I confirm that this thesis has been entirely composed by me, the candidate, and is my work. It has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been distinguished and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

Tim Braunholtz-Speight
12th August 2014
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It is perhaps particularly appropriate for a study of power and community to be prefaced with thanks to the group of people whose support has empowered me to produce this thesis. Unfortunately, for the sake of brevity, and anonymity (for those who were research participants), I can't name everyone in my “PhD community”, but I hope no-one is overlooked, or feels it.

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Abbreviations

ACT  Assynt Crofters Trust
CalMac  Caledonian MacBrayne
CCI  Camuscross Community Initiative
CDI  Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative
CDLT, the Clan  Clan Donald Lands Trust
CLI  Community Land Initiative
CLSI  Community Land Scotland
CLU  Community Land Unit
CWA  Community Woodlands Association
DTAS  Development Trusts Association – Scotland
FCS  Forestry Commission for Scotland
FDM  Forest District Manager
FEI  Fearann Eilean Iarmain
FITS  Feed-In Tariff Scheme
HIE  Highlands and Islands Enterprise
LRPG  Land Reform Policy Group
Land Reform Act, LRSA  The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
NFLS  National Forest Land Scheme
SAC  Scottish Agricultural College
SCT  Sleat Community Trust
SLE  Scottish Land and Estates
SMO  Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
SRL  Sleat Renewables Limited
Chapter One  Introduction

a. Focus of the thesis and research questions

The early 1990s saw the emergence of a series of distinctive local initiatives in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Initially labelled “community buyouts” (and so countering them to the 1980s “management buyouts” of company shareholdings), they combined the creation of new place-based community organisations with the use of legal-economic means of power over resources – obtaining land ownership through purchase of rural estates – to pursue a wide range of goals. As the decade went on and the wider political context shifted, policy institutions followed (Watt 2012) and official support – advisory, technical and financial – helped grow this movement. Today, community land initiatives (CLIs) – a commonly-used term to refer to any locality-based group that controls, or is considering control of, land in the name of the community – are found across Scotland. In some areas, particularly the Western Isles, they have become major landowners. They vary in size, activities and other characteristics. However, most are engaged in multiple activities in their areas, and are run as social enterprises with a locally-based membership.

There is a growing academic literature on community land ownership, which takes a variety of approaches. Some studies examine it through policy-related lenses, such as community resilience (Skerratt 2013), or sustainable development (McMorran et al 2013), sometimes focussing on an individual organisation (Didham 2007), or comparing multiple CLIs with other structures of land management (Glass et al 2013). Some examine it in relation to understandings of community and crofting (Brown K 2007, Brown A 2008, Busby and Macleod 2010). Others draw on political and cultural geography, including approaches related to Foucauldian notions of discourse and resistance (MacKenzie 2012) or post-colonial theory (MacPhail 2002).

The approach taken in this thesis is to use concepts of power and community to study the Scottish community land ownership movement. The thesis explores if, and how, community land ownership alters power relations. Such concerns are discernible in much of the literature referred to above; however, here the analytical framework is built around them directly. In part, this is justified because these two concepts are arguably among the fundamental concerns of the social sciences (Haugaard and Clegg 2008,
Hamilton 1985). They also appear particularly suited to a study of community land ownership. Perhaps most obviously, they are foregrounded in the movement’s presentation of itself. “Community” is highlighted in the language of individual CLIs and their umbrella body Community Land Scotland. This is often tied to “place”: the rhetoric of “local” also runs through the movement. Power – in the guise of “empowerment” - is also a frequently employed term. Government agencies, and sometimes CLIs themselves, describe what they do as “community empowerment” (Scottish Government 2009, 2014).

These concepts are also fundamental to the movement's structure and practice. CLIs are organised around the concept of place-based community: the idea that a group of people sharing a common location of residence constitute a community. Their focus on action through landownership rests on two premises. The first is that ownership of land brings with it powers that are significant to that community. The second is that the best way for that community to gain from those powers is by shifting the structure and place of decision-making: from individuals or small groups of people whose entitlement is based on money (owning land) or bureaucratic power (in the case of managers of public land), to open access to all local residents.

In these respects, the community land movement shares several features with a host of initiatives aimed at improving people's lives through increasing locally-based decision-making power. Varying widely in origins, goals and structures, included under this category might be neighbourhood regeneration or community development bodies (Shucksmith 2000, Schofield 2002, De Filippis and Saegert 2008, Lawless 2011, Mansuri and Rao 2013, Skerratt and Steiner 2013), local governance organisations (Raco and Flint 2001) or various forms of co-operatives and collective asset ownership bodies (Aiken et al 2008, Short 2008, Woodin et al 2010, Black and Leeman 2012). These initiatives may concern whole localities, or have a slightly different basis, e.g. a workplace; both also cited as bases for the formation of communities (Crow and Allan 1994: 3-4).

These initiatives often involve the creation of new decision-making spaces at local level. The power relations around these are sometimes analysed using democratic theory, as “grassroots democracy” (Kaufmann and Alfonso 1994), “participatory
“democracy” (Pateman 1970, Mansbridge 1983), or “empowered participatory governance” (Fung and Wright 2003). Others draw more on sociology and geography to analyse initiatives aimed at increasing “participation” in decision-making spaces, focussing on the terms of access to them, forms of power at work within them, and their enmeshment in wider structures of power at different spatial scales, from local to global (Cornwall 2002, 2005; Gaventa 2006a). This latter literature calls for (Cornwall 2002: iii):

a greater understanding of the micro-politics of participation (...) approaches that locate spaces for participation in the places in which they occur, framing their possibilities with reference to actual political, social, cultural and historical particularities.

This thesis represents an attempt to apply this approach to the Scottish community land ownership movement through the detailed examination of the operation of two CLIs. The primary research question is this: how does the creation of CLI decision-making spaces affect power relations at local level? Answering this involves studying the impact of CLIs' decisions and actions on the powers of the local population. It also involves examining power relations around the decision-making processes themselves – the dynamics of participation in the committees and other key fora of the CLIs. And while what is said and done as part of these processes is an important part of the study, the research goes beyond this “tip of the iceberg”, using intensive qualitative fieldwork to examine the sometimes “hidden”, even “invisible”, social and cultural contexts in which these more “visible” actions occur (Gaventa 2006a: 29). For community land ownership, a key element of this context is “community” - both as social structure and cultural construct. It thus forms the object of a subsidiary research question: how does “community”, as structure, practice and meaning, affect CLIs' impact on power relations?

b. Introduction to the case study and the structure of the thesis

The thesis approaches these questions, and the community land movement, through an examination of two CLIs in Sleat. Sleat, or Sleite in Gaelic, is the southernmost peninsula of the Isle of Skye. It has a population of around 900 people, dispersed fairly evenly around the area in 11 or so townships. The population has almost doubled in the last 40 years; one major factor in this has been the development of the national Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, on the peninsula. This has brought jobs, enabling people to
stay, and attracting new residents. This has been coupled with more general in-
migration to the Highlands and Islands from the rest of Britain in recent decades,
facilitated by changing patterns of housing and wealth, employment and
communications, and cultural shifts in perceptions of urban and rural living. Far from
the stereotypical remote rural backwater, Sleat is, like many places, somewhere where
the demography – and the community – is in flux.

The CLIs researched for this thesis are the Sleat Community Trust (SCT), and the
Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative (CDI). The former was formed in 2003, and covers
the entire peninsula. It currently owns a site near the ferry terminal where it operates a
shop/PO, petrol station and leases a garage; and a substantial forest, with plans
underway to buy more forestry. It generates income chiefly from timber sales and from
grant and loan funding. SCT activists – by “activist” I will mean anyone, staff or
volunteer, regularly involved in the work of the organisation – have recently become
directors of both Community Land Scotland and the Community Woodlands
Association, two membership organisations which represent many community land
initiatives. The Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative began almost as a breakaway from
SCT, as the Camuscross Community Initiative, focussing on what its activists felt was a
relatively neglected part of the peninsula. The neighbouring township of Duisdale was
incorporated during the process of the group acquiring a local reservoir, for use as a
source of hydro-electric power, through the Land Reform Act. CDI is currently still
working on the hydro scheme, but its main concern is the development of a
“Sustainable Community Hub”: a shop/café/venue building in its locality.

It is obvious even from this brief account that neither of the Sleat CLIs is a large-scale
landowner. Most of the peninsula is in the hands of two private estates. The CLIs own
small- to medium-size areas of land and fixed tangible assets. In this respect they are
not typical of the big “community buyouts” with which the community land movement
is often associated. Neither can the thesis seek to examine the kind of impacts on
powers and power relations which might be expected from a long-established large-
scale buyout. However, as will be discussed in greater detail later, the Sleat CLIs are
more typical of community land ownership in general than the stereotype suggests –
even in the Highlands and Islands. They are also, like Sleat itself, dynamic and
changing. What this thesis offers is a study of power and community in community land initiatives at a particular stage in their ongoing development.

**Structure of the thesis**

This introduction has situated the thesis conceptually and introduced the object of study: power relations in the community land ownership movement. The following chapter explores the concepts of power and community in greater depth, and develops an analytical framework for applying them to the case. The methodology chapter then explains how this framework was operationalised in practice, detailing the process of the research step-by-step, and considering the implications of the decisions made for the analysis.

The presentation of the research data then begins. One chapter explores the historical and contemporary context in which the Scottish community land movement has developed, and explores the wider power relations involved in the development and current situation of that movement. The following chapters then present the data from primary research into the two CLIs active in Sleat. Three chapters deal with material concerning local level interaction, organised around the themes of community, actors, and projects.

The final section opens with a discussion chapter, which develops the analysis of the themes touched on and illustrated in the data chapters. A concluding chapter reflects on the contribution of the thesis to various academic literatures, and sets out some possible directions for further work.
Chapter Two  Literature review and conceptual framework

a. Introduction
Power and community are the central themes of this thesis. This chapter draws on the social science literature on these topics to discuss power and community in turn, before concluding by drawing together the various strands of debate that have been touched on to develop the conceptual framework that will be applied in the analysis of the empirical data. It does not attempt to comprehensively cover the entire, voluminous literature on these topics, but sets the framework in the context of the wider literature and justifies the use of particular interpretations of concepts in the analysis to follow.

b. Power and empowerment
Power is a fundamental and widely debated concept in the social sciences (Haugaard and Clegg 2008, Lukes 2005, Gaventa 2003, Scott 2001, Giddens and Pierson 1998, Mann 1986). This is both a strength and a challenge for the researcher. The social theory literature on power is massive, characterised by competing schools of thought, and includes a huge range of social phenomena in the category of data relevant to any empirical study of power. Some element of narrowing the scope of enquiry and defining the terms used must be undertaken to produce a workable research project. The suggestion that power is a “conceptual tool”, whose many uses bear a Wittgensteinian “family resemblance” to each other and are fit for different purposes (Haugaard and Clegg 2008: 4, 23), is a useful starting point from which to venture into these debates.

A conception of power fit for the present study of empowerment in relation to community land ownership must be sensitive to the different spaces in which power is produced and power relations negotiated. It must not be based on an assumption that the study of power is the study of the formal political spaces of state legislatures or executives, but be more general and applicable to informal and everyday political interaction outwith the state (Leftwich 2004: 102), such as in relation to community projects. And given that the study concerns organisations based in communities of place, making claims about locality and community, and questions over the control of physical assets, the conceptual framework should incorporate place and resources. It must also be broad enough to be able to be used to analyse the diverse range of claims
made for community land ownership - including its role in enhancing economic
development, tenure security, social justice and local democracy – without being
restricted only to activists' own definitions of the scope of the analysis. It must in
principle admit of the possibility of change in power relations, and the empowerment of
agents, although the question of whether empowerment has occurred in any particular
case must be left open. It should also facilitate the making of judgements as to the
extent or significance of changes in power relations, although not necessarily
“measuring” them. Finally, it must be useable in an empirical study; it must include
guidance for how power can be found and identified, and it must not rest on
epistemological premises that demand omniscience on the part of the researcher.

The rest of this section will develop such a framework, drawing substantially on the
“powercube” model proposed by Gaventa (2005, 2006a). This makes connections
between a number of social theory approaches to power to construct a three-way
typology of “faces” of power, “spaces” of engagement, and “places” or spatial-
institutional levels of action (see Figure 2.1). Previous uses of the model include studies
undertaken in a range of contexts. It has been used by a number of non-governmental
organisations (NGOs) active in international development, in critical reflection on their
work (see Gaventa 2005); and similarly by activists and scholars examining
participatory initiatives in the global South and North (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). It
has been used in the UK: by UK NGOs in a mixture of reflective activism and action
research (Hunjan and Keophilavong 2010, Hunjan and Petit 2011); in a study of UK
level policy change (Leat 2008); and in a number of small scale UK studies e.g. for
Masters dissertations (available on www.powercube.net). The model is also discussed in
a wide-ranging UK study of participation and power (Brodie et al 2009: 36-40).

The use of this model goes some way to addressing several of the concerns outlined
above. It was developed to aid the analysis of action by NGOs and/or citizen-based
organisations, and is therefore sensitive to issues of power beyond a narrow focus on
formal, professional politics and government. It has a specific concern with how spaces
of interaction shape power relations; it also encourages an examination of the spatial
scales of the operation of power, and power relations between actors operating in
different places or at different scales.
However, the powercube model does not comprehensively address all the desirable features of a conceptual framework for this thesis identified above. Therefore, the discussion of power in the rest of this chapter will both expound the model further and modify it – as researchers are explicitly encouraged to do by its author (Gaventa 2005: 33). This discussion will begin with some central ideas about what kinds of actions and relationships can be said to involve power, including (but not limited to) the “faces of power” debate which informs the powercube model, and then move on to questions of how to identify them. Issues of place and space will be considered, followed by the relationship between power and resources. The possibility of change in power relations will be examined, and methods for analysing the significance of different powers and power relations also covered. The chapter will then move on to the next section, which relates relevant themes from the social science literature on community to the conceptual framework of power just developed.

Figure 2.1 The Powercube Model
Source: Gaventa 2006a: 25
NB While the original diagram used the term “Forms of power”, “Faces of power” has been substituted here, to aid clarity through maintaining consistency with the terms used in the rest of the thesis.
**Actors, relationships and powers**

One view of power is that it is found in social relationships where there is a *conflict* between the two social actors. This view is perhaps most associated with Weber (1978: 54):

> power (macht) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.

Power is seen as necessarily involving the possibility of resistance, even if this possibility may not always be realised. Power is a property of the relationship between the two actors, and can in principle be measured – the probability of one actor prevailing over the other. For this reason it is termed a “zero-sum” conception of power: for one actor to gain power, the other must lose some; power cannot be increased, only its distribution altered. Power in such a relationship is also called “distributed” power (Mann 1986), “domination” (Lukes 2005), and “power over” (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 45). Such power is often linked to how much the two actors depend on each other: the extent to which each actor controls access to something that the other actor needs to fulfil their goals. The significance of the goals in question to each actor, and the degree to which alternative means of fulfilling them are available, will determine the balance of power in the relationship (Scott 2001: 138-141).

Alternatively, power is seen as the *capacity* for action, and found in a much wider range of relationships and situations. An actor's power is simply seen as what they are able to do. There is a fine distinction to be drawn between the existence of a capacity: for example, the ability to read; and the conditions that allow the exercise of that capacity: for example, having access to a book, or reading glasses. It can be seen that there may be many factors enabling or constraining the exercise of such powers, including patterns of social relationships, and indeed the actor's awareness of their own powers. (It is perhaps hard to imagine someone who can read but is not aware of this; but when one considers instead something like learning to read, or perhaps to do a new job, the importance of an actor's awareness of their power to learn, or develop, may be clearer. This is a point that will be returned to shortly.) This is an “additive” concept of power: one actor's power does not necessarily take away from that of another; it is possible, then, for the total sum of power to be increased. This conception of power is also referred to as “power to”, “puissance” or “potentia” (Lukes 2005: 73); a similar
conception of power is at the root of Sen's discussion of capabilities and freedoms (Sen 1999).

These social relations may take diverse forms. Mann draws a distinction between “intensive” power, which often involves tight organisational structures, and “diffuse” power created by many small interactions between many people, not necessarily co-ordinated by any one formal organisation (Mann 1986: 7-8). The kind of close contact, high commitment social relations that produce “intensive power” are, as Mann notes (1986: 8), frequently studied and probably the sorts of social relations most often associated with power relations between social actors. Yet diffuse social relations are also important for enabling individual skills and abilities to be translated into what Sen refers to as a “capability set”, where “a person's ‘capability refers to the alternative combinations of functionings\(^1\) that are feasible for her to achieve” (Sen 1999: 75). For example, the power to earn an income, or obtain food without growing it oneself, depends in part on the existence of labour and food markets, financial systems, trade networks, and a host of more or less intentionally organised forms of human co-operation, as well as the skills and efforts of the actor who earns the income or obtains the food, and their immediate employer, grocer or food donor. Put another way, many people would find their capability set drastically reduced if stranded alone on a desert island. As Lukes notes (2005: 157, footnote 8):

in general, the outcomes from social power will presuppose social relations.

However, it is a mistake to see diffuse and intensive power as mutually exclusive, or diffuse power as something that emerges “naturally”. Intensive power relationships may have all sorts of consequences for the production of diffuse power in many other relationships. Equally, of course, intensive power relationships are conducted in particular diffuse power contexts. Thus, for example, while market exchange offers an example of diffuse power, the way in which particular markets work can be affected by the intensive power relationships within national governments setting policy and enforcing law, companies making business decisions, all of which are making their decisions with varying degrees of awareness and knowledge of the wider market. In general, the particular relationship between intensive and diffuse power - and their implications for individuals' powers - will vary from context to context.

\(^1\) Sen uses “functionings” to mean, roughly, goals or outcomes.
Some see the social actors in these power relations exclusively as individuals (Giddens and Pierson 1998: 87-88), while others extend the concept to cover “collective agents” (Lukes 2005: 72). Two (or more) actors may create power through working together: “positive sum” or “collective” power (Mann 1986), or “power with” (Chambers 2006). While this latter concept is sometimes associated with egalitarian organisations or campaigns (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 45), Mann sees collective power as a property of co-ordinated action that may have a wide range of structures, including hierarchical ones, and notes that different aspects of social power “operate simultaneously and are intertwined” in “most social relations” (Mann 1986: 6). Thus, even putting aside benign exercises of “power over” such as teaching someone, unequal power relationships may deliver benefits to the less powerful (Lukes 2005: 10-11, 112). Further, the less powerful may not be totally powerless in such relationships; determining the balance of power in relationships that are unequal, but not totally one-sided, is at the heart of the study of the politics of patronage and clientelism, for example (see e.g. Ferguson 2013). These are important points for studying the complexity of power in practice.

For this study, a view of power that encompasses a range of relationships seems appropriate. Firstly, if different power relationships are frequently “intertwined” in practice (Mann 1986: 6), a broad view of power is called for. Again, given that this study takes an exploratory approach to community land ownership, a broad conception of power avoids overly limiting the exploration and resulting data. Secondly, to restrict the analysis to instances of conflict – even including latent or unacknowledged conflict - is to exclude much potentially instructive data on how community land ownership does, or does not, touch people's lives. It also creates a curiously lopsided analysis, applying critical scrutiny to conflictual relationships and interests, but lumping together and taking for granted non-conflictual relationships and goals of social action. Thirdly, while a community case study to some extent inevitably focusses on the more intensive and local relations of power, it is important to situate such a study within the context of wider social relations, to avoid begging the question of how significant intra-community politics are for people's empowerment, as well as to avoid errors as to the nature of community more generally (see discussion in 2b below). A broad conception of power, then, minimises the extent to which the study prejudges what kind of relationships are more significant to people's lives or interests.
Actors, structures, and faces of power

The powercube model categorises forms of power into “visible”, “hidden” and “invisible” (Gaventa 2005: 11); a classification of “faces” of power that draws on a prominent debate in political sociology. The foundation of this debate is the well-known structure-agency problem in sociology: the question of the relationship between wider social structures and patterns of behaviour, and individuals' thought and behaviour. Thus far in this chapter, power has been discussed as a property of actors and their relationships, whether individual humans, or perhaps organisations or groups – collective actors. However, Mann's concept of “diffuse” power draws on a substantial body of work which understands power as a property of social structures, or patterns of behaviour. Actors only have power through their position in these structures; in some approaches, actors only exist as points in a structure. Power is understood not as a dimension of conflict, nor simply as an additive property of actors, but as an underlying force that creates the social world, as “constitutive” (Lukes 2005: 95).

For some who take this approach, power's role is fundamentally a benign process (as in the work of Arendt and Parsons). However, for the recently influential theorist Michel Foucault (1980, 2003), power is more ambiguous. He focusses particularly on the power of ideas and culture, the interplay and circulation of which he terms “discourse”. The content of the discourse current in any society determines what is to be counted as the truth, and establishes “norms” - certain ways of thinking and acting over others. These truths and norms have consequences for power relationships among the members of that society. Power therefore both produces the possibilities of the social world, through giving individuals ways to think and act - but it also defines and limits those possibilities. Power relations are complex, but at heart are relations of domination (see Scott 2001: 6-12).

Foucault's analytical method was to trace the historical co-development of discourses and norms with social structures. He contended that discourses spread through myriad forms of social relations, including those institutionalised in organisations. However, rather than focus on the structural analysis of an institution alone, he preferred to speak of an “apparatus” of power, a network linking organisations, practices, thoughts, relationships and more (Foucault 2003: xvi). Such an apparatus could promote
“discipline” - the adherence to norms – and act on individuals' perceptions of the world and themselves – their “subjectification”. While Foucault developed the study of the connection between culture, power and prevailing norms to a great extent, it can be seen to have many antecedents, notably Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and the connections between ideology and power (Gramsci 1971).

Notably, Mackenzie (2012) has drawn on these and related ideas to study community land ownership. She contends (2012: 222) that community land initiatives have become the sites of collective labour where property norms are “undone”.

And while she notes the immediate and local social structural effects of community ownership – in terms of population growth, houses built, income generated etc. (for more discussion of these see Chapter Four below), it is the cultural effects that she sees as having most significance for wider power relations. She counter poses land ownership in the name of all residents in a community, and the use of the land by that community as a collective actor, to previous norms of privatisation of land, and separation of “nature” from “culture” (Mackenzie 2012: 4). She suggests that the islands of the Outer Hebrides have become “places of possibility”, where “neoliberalism's normalising practices are countered” (Mackenzie 2012: 4), and that (Mackenzie 2012: 225):

the actions of the communities themselves, and of Community Land Scotland, contribute to the growing visibility of this counter-hegemonic narrative,

Returning to these broader arguments about the power of structure and culture, they carry considerable force. However, this does not necessarily mean that the study of power at the individual level must be abandoned. Rather, the two approaches might be combined. As discussed above, many “individual” powers discussed above are only possible, or useful, in a social context. Humans are clearly social beings who develop their personalities and abilities – their powers – through social interaction with each other, and whose actions are enabled, or constrained, by the wider circumstances they find themselves in. Indeed, as Lukes says, these are “sociological commonplaces” (Lukes 2005: 97). And it is certainly plausible and worthy of consideration that
structures and patterns of social and cultural life – networks of economic exchange, political institutions, or indeed beliefs about land and community – must be part of any understanding of the powers of individual actors or organisations. The difficulty for the researcher lies in understanding the relationship between individuals, and the larger entities and processes of which they are a part.

Such were the issues at the heart of the “faces of power” debate, where a highly individualistic approach to the study of power was challenged by theorists who felt structural issues had become neglected, and who attempted to combine an awareness of the power implications of social structure and culture with a focus on individuals as the basic unit of society. The first face (or “dimension”, as Lukes puts it) of power is that of visible conflict. Some theorists (Dahl 1961, Polsby 1994) advocated restricting the study of power to cases where conflict emerged in public decision-making arenas – parliaments, local authority assemblies, and so on. Where no conflicts emerged, consensus was presumed. Others (e.g. Bachrach and Baratz 1962) suggested that it could not be assumed that all social conflicts would be debated in formal public arenas. Such an assumption, underpinning the exclusive focus on public behaviour and formal arenas, risked ignoring a “second face” of power: not only a great deal of “behind the scenes” activity in formal political institutions, but also a number of possible mechanisms whereby power relations might prevent certain issues being incorporated into the formal agenda of political bodies. These might range from procedural rules that raise barriers to some people's participation in formal processes, to power relations that work to inhibit some actors from, for example, raising issues that they know their superiors in an organisation do not wish to discuss. Therefore, the absence of conflict over a particular issue in formal arenas cannot be taken to indicate a corresponding absence of conflictual power relations in wider society. Power researchers must not only study the content of decision-making processes, but also seek to uncover mechanisms of “nondecision-making” and the “mobilisation of bias” which prevented some people's grievances from being discussed in formal processes.

A further step was taken by Lukes (2005), who suggested that the “second face” approach was still overly reliant on the expressed preferences of social actors seen as making rational choices, and did not take sufficient account of processes of
socialisation, and cultural norms, that might prevent grievances even being formed (Lukes 2005: 27):

A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants.

This “third face” of power, he argued, could be identified where people's interests were harmed, but they took no action or expressed no awareness of it.

This question, of how and why people appear to come to acquiesce in their own domination, is frequently raised in the literature on power (Gaventa 1980; Lukes 2005: 9-11). An approach with similarities to Lukes' is taken by Bourdieu, with his concepts of “misrecognition” and “symbolic violence”. Misrecognition occurs when the “objective” reality of power relations is disguised by “subjective experience” (Bourdieu 1977: 5-6), and existing power inequalities become taken for granted as natural and inevitable, instead of contingent and the product of struggle (Bourdieu 1977: 164). Such misrecognition might be the outcome of deliberate action by actors employing “symbolic violence” to dominate others (Bourdieu 1977:190-193); or be internalised as part of an actor's “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977: 78). The habitus, “history turned into nature” (Bourdieu ibid) is the accumulation of ideas, habits and dispositions that actors more or less unconsciously draw on to live their lives. For Bourdieu, it represents the point at which structure (through experience, or “history”) meets agent, and is they key to understanding how power relations reproduce themselves. Another important related concept is that of “doxa” (Bourdieu 1977: 164), the taken-for-granted common sense truths about the world which (as with the products of the third face of power) are not questioned, but which nevertheless underpin power relations. (From a less actor-centred standpoint, such issues can be seen in Foucault's discussion of how different discourses empower some and disempower others through producing willing compliance with domination, and the “truths” which justify it.)

Others have suggested that such inaction can be accounted for in other ways that do not involve the suggestion that inaction means that the less powerful are unaware, or self-deceiving, of their interests being harmed. These include the suggestions that their inaction may be seen as “strategic compliance” (Agarwal cited in Kabeer 1999: 8), a
“frontstage” presentation covering up “backstage” subversion (e.g. Scott 1987); as the product of the implicit striking of a material or cultural bargain (Tilly cited in Lukes 2005: 10-11); as the product of lack of material or organisational resources (Mann 1986: 7) or simply as resulting from repression (Tilly *ibid*). While these debates are naturally long-running, what the idea of the third face of power has achieved is, as Gaventa notes, to remind analysts that quiescence and inaction require explanation just as much as conflict and action (Gaventa 1980: 26).

At times the distinction between the second and third faces of power is not entirely clear. It is of course important to realise that any given action or process may have effects in multiple faces of power (Lukes 2005: 121-2). Yet there remains some significant ambiguity in this approach, particularly in relation to intention. To what extent Lukes sees the effects of the “third face” of power as being the unintended consequences of cultural processes, or as involving the conscious manipulation of cultural factors by actors, is not always clear. And the content of the thoughts and worldviews that underlie the lack of expression of grievance by the less powerful is a matter of study and debate (Lukes 2005: 124-134, Gaventa 1980; Scott 1987, 1989). Again, the “second face” of power also seems to cover both intentional acts: the use or abuse of procedures, or the obeying of the “letter” rather than the “spirit” of the law; and the unintended consequences of organisational structures and procedures that affect access to the institutions of formal decision-making power. In this latter sense, the second face begins to slide into the third.

*Finding power in practice*

How can these concepts be operationalised in research? It is clear that, given the complexity of people's lives - the multiple social domains in which we engage and the numerous and varied social relationships which create these - even the approximate assessment of relative powers will be a complex task. Measurement of any one actor's power is logically possible if there is a single essence of power, but not if different sorts of power are not commensurable. Mann suggests that the multi-dimensionality of power – its diversification into economic, political, ideological and military means of action – has just that implication (Mann 1986: 533): it is not possible to make a general judgement as to whether one actor is more powerful than another.
Lukes sketches out a “conceptual map” of power, and while he does not explicitly label it a tool for the assessment of power, he does discuss how using the criteria he develops can enable comparisons of the relative power of different actors. The criteria focus on the conditions and consequences of the exercise of powers. They include: the cost to the actor of exercising them, and how far an actor can passively enjoy power without having to expend resources to exercise it; the range of circumstances in which the powers obtain; and the number of issues they impact on (Lukes 2005: 74-83). Impressive as it is, there are significant practical difficulties attendant on using this conceptual map as a tool for assessing power, dependent as it is on many counterfactuals. For example, can the range of circumstances in which an actor has the power to do something be accurately judged, when the one circumstance in which they do (or do not) have that power is the only one that can be observed?

The discussion of “real interests” above raises further difficulties around the significance of different powers and people's choices between them. How can objective interests be identified other than through people's own subjective interpretations of them? On the one hand, it is hardly credible to contend that subjective preferences are always correct, as this would entail believing that people can never be mistaken or misled. On the other hand, to some extent, people's varied preferences for different “valued functionings” (Sen 1999: 75) are simply an expression of individual variation. Suppose that some people value participation in local decision-making; and others see this as a meaningless burden, and even positively value its absence from their lives: can the same activity, participation, be assessed as empowering for one actor and disempowering for another? One answer to this question is to look for differences in the two actors' experiences of participation. There may be contingent reasons why the activity is not “the same” for them both. But the logical problem remains.

Several solutions to this problem have been proposed. One is to look for a “control” situation, where similar actors in similar situations have acted differently, and try to uncover the reasons why. Thus Crenson (1971) looked for towns that had passed anti-pollution legislation sooner than his case study, and found they were less dominated by industry; other examples have been studies of “untouchables” in India seeking various ways to escape the restrictions of ideologies of caste that they nominally subscribe to (Lukes 2005: 52, Mosse 2007: 26).
Kabeer (1999) analyses the significance of powers in terms of the logical order of choices that people make in their lives. Choices that open up more choices are “first order” choices, or “strategic life choices”, and more significant than those “second order” ones that do not. She contrasts, for example, the power to choose whether or not to have children, with the power to choose what kind of fruit to give them for lunch (Kabeer 1999: 3). People's interests lie in having the power to make strategic life choices.

Also addressing choice, Gaventa (1980:28-29), focusses on the process underpinning it. If an actor has been prevented from choosing one possible option that might otherwise have been available to them, then they have not made a fully empowered choice. Researchers can examine concrete instances of choice, and where appropriate, investigate the means and agents of any such denials of choice, without having to identify any one preference as the actor's “real” interest. Lukes (2005: 149) follows a similar path when he suggests that, rather than starting by trying to identify underlying “truths” about interests, researchers should instead focus on the possible exercise of “the power to mislead”.

What does this discussion tell us about the theory and practice of power analysis? Firstly, perhaps that gathering the breadth and depth of data required for the comprehensive analysis of all power relations in any one social context is not possible. There are logistical and epistemological impossibilities. Thus Tilly (2002: 152) suggests that power is simply “an analyst's summary of transactions among persons and social sites” and that it is “incessantly negotiated”. This implies that any precise measurement is quite impossible. Concluding his discussion of the problem of “real interests”, Lukes suggests that the concept can only be employed in the context of a particular analytical framework, with its own definition of interests – whether in terms of extent or significance of choices, material or cultural wellbeing (Lukes 2005: 148-9). This situates this view of power in an interpretative approach to social science (see Chapter 3b below). A second conclusion to draw from the preceding discussion, then, might concern what kind of power research is possible. Instead of an idealised absolute knowledge of power, power research may aim at suggestions as to the likely shape of power relations in a given context, and possible accounts of how and why this is so.
In this approach, these concepts, including the faces of power debates, are useful in pointing towards various particular mechanisms and social processes through which power relations may be established and develop. Thus, the concept of a third face to power directs attention to the social and cultural contexts in which more visible actions and decision-making processes occur. It suggests that, where people's experience and practicable options are extremely limited, one should not necessarily take their expressed preferences as “the last word on the matter” of what is in their interest (Nussbaum cited in Lukes 2005: 146) – although neither should they be ignored, of course. More generally, it is an injunction to take culture seriously, helping researchers guard against assuming that the same structural form (e.g. elections) embodies the same cultural content in all contexts (Cohen 1985: 76).

The discussion of the second face of power directs attention towards the complexity of the social processes and array of institutions lying between most ordinary people and the few people in positions of formal political power. It highlights the ways in which ordinary people's concerns are, or are not, transmitted into action by those in formal positions; and, conversely, to the similarly complex chains of interaction that produce the actual implementation of any given formal policy decision. Thus it is common for social or environmental activists to lament that even when laws they approve of are enacted, they are not enforced, or lack “teeth”: the concept of the second face of power helps integrate such concerns into an analytical framework.

Another important but less visible mechanism of power is “anticipated reaction” (Scott 2001: 4, Lukes 2005: 78). Conscious actors do not simply respond to stimuli – they analyse the world around them and respond “in advance”. Therefore, one actor may hold or “enjoy” power (Lukes 2005: 79) as a result of others' beliefs about them. These beliefs may be based on observation of past actions, a reputation for acting a certain way, or the appearance of being able or likely to act a certain way: sometimes they may be accurate, sometimes mistaken. This can even be exploited by actors who attempt to appear to have more powers than they actually do. Goffman has written of how actors practice “impression management” in order to convince others of a certain “definition of the situation” which may not reflect all the relevant information (Goffman 1980: 15, 231). He further notes that, intentional or not, the making and forming of impressions,
and judgements and actions based on them, are an inescapable part of social life (Goffman 1980: 13-15): as are, therefore, anticipated reactions.

Finally, consideration of the third face of power directs attention towards the processes by which people not only make judgements of others, but by which they think about themselves (including in relation to others), and develop their own goals and strategies for their lives. This recalls the discussion earlier in this chapter of the importance of actor's awareness of their own powers and capacities for their exercise of them. Kabeer uses the term “agency”, stating that in this usage (1999: 3, emphasis in the original):

agency is about more than observable action: it also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose that individuals bring to their activity – their sense of agency, or what feminists have called 'the power within'.

VeneKlasen and Miller employ just this term, “power within”, to refer to “a sense of self-worth and self-knowledge”; within the latter they include an awareness of one's own power (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 45). In the same passage they refer to “the capacity to imagine and have hope”, something very similar to which is discussed by Appadurai in his paper on the “capacity to aspire” (Appadurai 2004). Appadurai suggests that the more powerful have a greater experience of being able to achieve goals, and match aspirations and outcomes; each success increases their capacity to do so further. In so doing, they not only increase their own confidence and sense of agency, but also shape culturally-specific aspirations for others whose chance of realising them is slim, and who may thus come to associate aspiration more with “wishful thinking” than “thoughtful wishing” (Appadurai 2004: 26). As VeneKlasen and Miller note, such capacities have been the focus of many initiatives by activists seeking to alter power relations; in this chapter, issues of self-belief and power will be taken further in the discussion of change and empowerment below.

**Spaces and places**

The other two axes of the power cube model are “space” and “place”. Space refers to social “spaces for engagement” (Gaventa 2006a: 27), any social context or practice where people come together. Focussing on the role of such spaces in power relations, and in particular in relation to governance and to political decision-making, the cube uses a threefold categorisation of “closed”, “invited” and “claimed/created” spaces. A
space is closed to an actor if they cannot participate directly in it: a space where (Gaventa 2006a: 26):

elites (be they bureaucrats, experts or elected representatives) make decisions and provide services to ‘the people’, without the need for broader consultation or involvement.

Invited spaces are those in which participation is possible, but on the terms of those who created the space. Many of the initiatives associated with the co-production of public services – service user groups and others – have broadly this character. Claimed or created spaces are those where actors have the power to define the terms of participation – whether by taking over a space previously less open (claimed), or through creating their own space, for example through self-organised social movements.

The purpose of employing this categorisation is to stimulate analysis of the power context of particular social encounters. The focus on the terms of participation in spaces most clearly links to the notion of “hidden power” outlined above, where ‘rules of the game’ affect who can do what in any given space. Much of the work done with this categorisation has focussed on the experience of “ordinary people” in the global South in invited spaces (Cornwall 2005), part of a broader current in development studies that analyses the governance and politics of development initiatives. Thus a move towards greater public participation in such initiatives has been advocated as a means towards empowerment for the less powerful (Chambers 1983), attacked for failing to achieve this and masking ongoing inequalities (Cooke and Kothari 2001), and yet also re-evaluated as offering possibilities for empowerment (Hickey and Mohan 2005) contingent on a range of process and contextual factors. Again, many studies in the UK, sometimes but not always referencing this space categorisation, have focussed on similar issues around participation in invited spaces, often those created as part of new governance approaches promoted by the New Labour government (see e.g. Taylor 2007, Jones 2003, Raco and Flint 2001).

However, it is clear that the approach is capable of being used to analyse a wide range of spaces – not just formal channels for public participation in governance. Every space, including “created” spaces, will have its own dynamics, a product of relations internally between participants, and the “experiences and expectations” they bring in from
elsewhere (Cornwall 2005: 78; see also Gaventa 2005: 28). Thus Gaventa (2006a: 27) explicitly intends the term created spaces to cover a diversity of social settings:

from ones created by social movements and community associations, to those simply involving natural places where people gather to debate, discuss and resist, outside of the institutionalised policy arenas.

While not employing the “space” approach, Mosse (2007: 32-33) similarly notes that while “selfhelp groups or users’ associations for improved management of resources” generally do have the potential to “enhance poor people's power to achieve their ends”, they may also “reproduce wider power relations”, either through how they operate internally or in relation to other forms of local organisation, or in their relations with organisations at wider spatial levels. Such an observation is not particularly new – the analysis of power relations within diverse social settings is a staple of political sociology. Yet it is important to bear it in mind to guard against any simplistic and uncritical division of spaces into “bad” and unequal closed or invited spaces, and “virtuous” and egalitarian “created” “grassroots” spaces and organisations (see e.g. Chollett 2011).

Spaces can be categorised from a range of different actors' perspectives also. The parliamentary committee (or even London gentleman's club) that is a closed space to most people, may be seen as claimed or created by the MPs who use it. The key insight is that it matters how and by whom a space was created, and what the “terms of engagement” in it are (Gaventa 2006a: 26).

Place is used to indicate different geographical scales of activity. The suggested basic categorisation is again threefold: local, national, global. Reviewing the literature on civil society and social change, Gaventa notes that there is much debate between advocates of local-based organisation, and those who feel that globalisation is shifting power to “extra-local arenas”. He implies that rather than one or the other, power is found at many different levels of place, and emphasises the importance of connections between levels - “vertical links” - in social change.

The power cube model, then, offers a way of integrating concerns about power, social space and geographical place. Mosse describes it (2007: 45) as a way to:
visualise the intersection of the forms, spaces and levels of power. However, its author cautions against “checklist” approaches to using it to analyse power. It should instead be seen as a starting point to stimulate “critical reflection” about the relationships between forms, context and geographical scales of power, and to draw attention to how these relationships are dynamic and changing (Gaventa 2005: 19). The categories themselves (Gaventa 2006a: 28):

should be seen as a flexible, adaptable continuum, not as a fixed set of categories.

NGO practitioners in Colombia, for example, developed a fivefold categorisation of spaces and an eightfold categorisation of places or geographical levels of engagement, from neighbourhood to international (Gaventa 2005: 21) – rather distorting the neat cube of the initial model, but offering a richer analysis to its users in that context. The model is not intended as a universal blueprint for analysis (or strategising), but more as a prompt sheet of questions and lines of enquiry, that can only yield answers in application to specific contexts (Gaventa 2005: 19).

The rest of this section on power will therefore discuss other areas of the study of power that will be integrated with the power cube model to provide a fuller framework specifically for the analysis of community land ownership. These will be: the study of the relationship between resources and power, and related attempts to classify social life into different realms or domains (such as the economic, or the political); and how change in power relations might arise.

**Power and resources**

Community land ownership is evidently linked to control over material resources. This section will first outline the concept of a resource and its relation to power in general. It will then discuss some specific issues relating to the analysis of property rights and land.

The concept of “resource” is linked to something being of use – that is, something can be done with it (Leftwich 2004: 106). Something becomes a resource, therefore, only in the context of a specific relationship – when somebody can use it for something. The link between resources and power is thus clear: access to a resource can give power to
do something. However, exactly what a given object is used for – what kind of resource it is – can vary widely from one context to another. This is as true for material resources as for less tangible entities. Land, for example, is not necessarily viewed as an economic resource; it may be seen playing an ecological, social, cultural or spiritual role (Li 2012). The same piece of land might be used for agriculture, for building a house on, for playing sport on – or not valued at all. Even material objects that are constructed by people, such as buildings, can be “reimagined” and used for varying purposes in new contexts.

Following Mann, this analysis treats these general categories of use – economic, political, and so forth - as applying to types of social interactions and defining means of power: a means of doing something (Mann 1986: 5-6). To obtain food, for example, an actor might interact economically with another – buying it; or socially – asking a friend or relative for some. Of course, multiple types of interactions are often combined in the same social space; thus the person buying food may talk to the shopkeeper, combining the economic interaction with social interaction. Equally, the same entity may simultaneously be multiple types of resource – perhaps being used in different ways by different actors, and thus resulting in possibilities for interaction around resource-use decision-making. This is not to imply that such multiplicity of use is limitless. For example, Bourdieu (1977: 186-187) suggests that different “fields of production” will have their own preferred form of “capital” for use within them – money in the economic field, formal educational qualifications in the cultural field, and so on. In his view, a given entity must be transformed into a form of capital that has currency within the field in which one wishes to use it.

The distribution of resources in society may be held to indicate who has power. However, going from resources to power is complex in practice. Two key issues are: what kinds of resources give what powers; and how are resources turned into power.

On the first issue, Dahl traces explanations of patterns of power in terms of actors’ differing resources back to Aristotle, but states that there is “no accepted way of classifying resources” (Dahl 1986: 44). Goldman (1986: 101) goes further, noting not only that
“it is surely wholly impossible to say what resources are necessary and sufficient for issues in general but also that it would be foolish to try to construct an analysis that itemizes relevant resources. For even a single issue, the number and variety of potentially relevant resources is endless.

Nevertheless, it may still be possible to itemise what resources were actually brought into play in particular situations; and there may be significant differences between different sorts of resources in respect of the powers they are relevant to. Dahl (1986: 44) summarises his own classification of power resources in “Who Governs?” (Dahl 1961) as:

- the patterns of social standing; the distribution of cash, credit and wealth; access to legality, popularity and the control of jobs; and control over sources of information.

Kabeer (1999: 14) also suggests that the type of resource an actor can command is important:

- the effects on women’s agency of access to land are very different from access to education, the effects of their access to waged employment very different from access to self-employment.

These lists of resources suggest that a range of means are used to sustain actual power relationships; that the particular patterns of these vary from one context to another; and that these varying patterns – these power structures – have different implications for the actors involved. The debate over whether one means of power, or resource use is the ultimate source of social power has a long history, notably driven by Marxist analyses (and other related work such as that of Bourdieu – see e.g. 1977: 183) which suggest that economic power is the foundation of all other power, and Weberian approaches which emphasise cultural and political power also (Mann 1986: 10-13; Shortall 1999: 11-14). It would seem that there is no obvious general answer as to whether one means or another is the determining factor in constructing power relationships. Conversely, a better working premise is that no one means is dominant across all contexts; that as
power is a capacity produced in social relationships, the link between resources and power will shift with the particular configuration of social relationships and material resources that make up particular contexts.

Turning to the issue of how resources are turned into power, Kabeer further notes that the access to a resource is not a simple matter, and even legally-sanctioned access – e.g. of women to land - will be conditioned by social and cultural factors (Kabeer 1999: 14-16). One might add other factors also. For example, knowledge and skills are key aspects of access to resources: it is hard for women to exercise their legal right to land (to continue with Kabeer's example) if they are unaware of the existence of such rights; and/or are unable to read, or unfamiliar with court protocol. Economic factors may also play a part: accessing resources may cost money (e.g. claiming rights in court). This recalls the discussion of the three faces or mechanisms of power above, where a power that one has 'officially' (first face) to access a resource may not be usable in practice. In other words, one has to ask, not only what a given resource gives its user the power to do, but on what does that actor's power to use it depend? What are the costs and benefits of its exercise? What further resources are necessary?

The simple term “ownership” - of land or anything else – does not reflect these complexities of resource access and use. The concept of “property rights” is more helpful, reflecting the fact that in different contexts, different combinations of rights over land will be held by different actors and on different bases. Van den Brink et al (2006: 4-8) suggest that key aspects of property rights with regard to land are: what rights-holders have the right to do with the land; what duration the rights have, and how this relates to the purpose to which the land is being put; to whom the rights belong – individuals or communities; and how tradeable are these rights – how and to whom rights can be sold or otherwise re-allocated.

As this list reflects, property rights are social relations – they define the distribution of powers over the use of a particular resource between different actors. They therefore vary from one social context to another; and changing the rules of these relations is a political project (Van den Brink et al 2006: 3, Peters 2007: 23). Notably in the context of the present study, Peters (2007: 22) cites
moves towards decentralization and community-based organization in the name of democracy and improved governance as factors that have intensified recent struggles over land in Africa. Such conflicts are unlikely to concern the totality of land rights, but rather the reformulation of particular bundles of rights. The list above counterposes individuals and communities as the two basic types of rights-holders, but most “property rights regimes” - combinations of different rights in use – allocate some rights to both types. It is rare in practice for individuals to have unfettered power over what they can do with land, or for collective bodies to have total control over their members' use of land under their control (Van den Brink et al 2006:5-6).

While property rights are indisputably social relations, the materiality of the resource in question may also be relevant to their power implications. Thus, in relation to land, Van den Brink et al include the duration of rights in their list because some uses require longer timescales than others to bear fruit – sometimes literally. For some agricultural uses, a single year (or less) is sufficient to sow and harvest a crop; for others, for example, forestry, decades are necessary (Warren 2009: 70). Similarly, property developers may be able to put up buildings and sell them relatively quickly, or may need to retain ownership for many years before rents from use of the site or buildings become profitable, depending on factors such as the type of building, or its location. This may depend on the nature of the land in the first place: how much work, and how costly an investment of materials, is needed to make it suitable for a particular use. To repeat: wider processes and structures are central to anything's worth as a resource, but in the case of tangible, material objects, that materiality may also play a part.

Change and empowerment
Some accounts of power seem to suggest that empowerment for the less powerful is virtually impossible, subject as they are to defeats in open contest, behind-the-scenes machinations, and a sense that existing inequalities are inevitable or indeed legitimate. Is this a problem? On the one hand, there can be a recursive aspect to power dynamics, where different faces of power reinforce each other, power in one domain of social life may be translated into another, and the experience of exercising power, or not, influence actors' self-images and aspirations, their very day-to-day experience and ways of living (Bourdieu 1977, Gaventa 1980: 20-23, Appadurai 2004). The possibility of
empowerment of the less powerful, of social change towards more egalitarian
distributions of power, should certainly not be assumed or taken for granted. However,
on the other hand, social change does occur; and a conceptual model that dwells
excessively on domination risks simply not seeing what potential for change there is.
The rest of this section will take the concepts of power discussed so far, and apply their
insights to the question of change and empowerment.

A first point to note is that, for a single individual, empowerment does not necessarily
require widespread transformation of power relations or a more egalitarian distribution
of power. The possibility that unequal power relationships nevertheless deliver some
benefits to the less powerful has already been noted in the discussion above. Adherence
to a subordinate position in an unequal relationship does not generally imply change or
empowerment. However, people can and do seek to increase their own personal power
simply through changing their position within unequal power structures – e.g. gaining
promotion at work - rather than changing the structure itself. Such a strategy may very
often be much less risky and onerous to pursue than the alternative of transforming
social relations for a whole group or category of people. Such individualistic change has
an ambiguous character. It certainly empowers those who achieve it, in concrete ways,
and it may have wider effects on the cultural or third face of power, as when individuals
from stigmatised backgrounds achieve high social status. But equally it can be taken as
an indication of consent to unequal power structures from the less powerful, and leave
most people's situation unchanged: just because “anyone can make it” does not mean
that everyone can. To conclude, each individual faces a tension between individualistic
and collective pathways to personal empowerment, in every area of life: people's varied
responses to this tension should be part of the analysis.

What of change in structures of relationships? A starting point for the analysis is that
complexity and diversity are the foundation of the potential for change, for doing or
thinking differently (Lukes 2005: 149-151, Kabeer 1999: 9, Mann 1986). And
complexity and diversity are found everywhere, from the level of global social and
cultural trends, to within individual psyches. While change that reinforces the power of
the more powerful is easy to envisage, as noted above, change in favour of the less
powerful is also possible. This awareness of social complexity helps us see that the
“less powerful” are not “powerless”; they may still have some access to resources, be
more powerful than others in some relationships or in some spaces and contexts. Further, even unequal power relationships may deliver some benefits to the less powerful, that they may be able to turn to their advantage in some circumstances (Mohan 2001: 164). Models of power often over simplify, identifying power as being held by a few key actors, or circulating in certain social networks, with particular social spaces as being central to decision-making. But the sheer number of actors and spaces – and especially the fluidity of the latter – show the constant potential in every society for what Mann terms “interstitial change” (Mann 1986: 15-16), that emerges from spaces and places other than the most powerful ones.

Often such change may not be purposively brought about; it may be the product of “chains of unintended consequences” (Lukes 2005: 76). Mann's concept of diffuse power suggests that any one actor's powers are founded on a web of many other social relationships. Change in one small relationship, or capacity, can feed through into many others through the relevant actors' connections with others. There are many potential pathways that change can take. Opportunities for new relationships may arise from wider social change – for example, as people change their patterns of residence, work or social and cultural activities; or from cultural change, as perceptions of selves and others change, new ways of working or otherwise interacting are developed. Social spaces may change with the introduction of new actors; new connections between social spaces, or levels of power, may be made. Or, changes in resources that are employed to sustain particular power relationships may force change in those relationships. Thus Allen (1995) suggests that the global recession of the 1980s weakened the material resource-base of many African states, some of whom responded by switching to using cultural resources – particularly ethnicity – to sustain power relationships. This led to a wave of ethnicised conflicts over state power in Africa in the 1990s. It is also apparent that changes in wider society can lead to something becoming a resource in ways that it was not before. An example that will be discussed in greater detail later in the thesis is that of the wind. A mixture of concerns about energy security and environmental issues have prompted the development and state support of wind-based renewable energy technology, which, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, has transformed perceptions of the wind from a constraint on development (Darling 1955: 158, 183) to a prized economic resource.
Some change is intended by actors, of course. Indeed, the examples given above illustrate actors responding purposively to wider, unintended changes – although not with full control over the consequences of their changes. Thus as opportunities for new relationships arise, people may take them up or not, in various ways. Sometimes this may involve new zero-sum relationships, where one actor extends their own power by dominating others that they have come into contact with. While this is a form of collective power, albeit a rather unequally distributed one, more additive forms of collective power can be created when people collaborate informally, or develop organisations. This power may be used in further collaborative relationships with other actors, individual or collective; or in more conflictual power struggles. In either case, greater capacity for action has been created. Equally, relationships may end, or weaken, perhaps creating problems for some and opportunities for others, both individuals, and collective organisations.

The power cube model was developed to aid the study of purposive social change, using the notion of multiple levels and spaces of power to examine social complexity. Underlying it is the premise that spaces are “constitutive as well as expressive of power relations” (Cornwall 2005: 83). In other words, while any social interaction reflects power relations already established (it is expressive), it also in turn impacts on those in the present and future (it is constitutive) and thus may offer the possibility of change.

Of course, such complexity can also be a challenge for the promotion of social change. While any change may spread through networks of relationships, it may also be diluted or countered by others acting through them. Gaventa suggests that “transformative fundamental change” is most likely to be achieved by action in different types of spaces, using different faces of power, at different place-levels, simultaneously – something he acknowledges will be rare (Gaventa 2006a: 30). Nevertheless, complexity also presents opportunities: this analysis also suggests that there may be multiple potential starting points and strategies for empowerment.

The role of culture, ideas and perceptions in power relations has been mentioned in the discussions earlier in this chapter. Agents acting to bring about change are clearly not consenting, grudgingly or otherwise, to their lot. Therefore, engaging with the third face of power, by challenging ideologies or cultural constructs that justify or normalise
inequalities of power, and building “power within”, is often seen as a vital first step in strategies for empowerment (e.g. Freire 1972, Gaventa 1980: 23-25, VeneKlasen and Miller 2003, Appadurai 2004). Thus Freire advocates for “conscientisation” through a kind of participatory (“dialogic”) educational process as the starting point for the empowerment of the less powerful, and quotes (1972: 47) “a peasant” as saying:

The peasant begins to get courage to overcome his dependence when he realises that he is dependent. Until then, he goes along with the boss and says, “What can I do? I'm only a peasant”.

It is important to note that Freire did not think that power within could be built only through discussion, nor that it should stop at the feeling of empowerment; for him, material change was also a necessary part of the means and goals of empowerment (Freire 1972: 52). And cultural strategies for empowerment are generally linked to change in other aspects of social life, just as the three faces of power are interlinked: the availability of both material and discursive alternatives to the status quo helps facilitate empowerment (Kabeer 1999: 9; see also e.g. Gaventa 1980: 256, Appadurai 2004, Lukes 2005: 120-121). Thus, while interpreting culture slightly more narrowly, as history, folklore, stories, music, etc. Ray (1998) suggests that valorising and promoting previously neglected local cultural heritage is a promising ground on which to build collaborative power relationships and promote economic development. As with the kinds of changes in social structures or resources discussed above, cultural change can come in many ways, and often mixes undirected “diffusion” of ideas and practices with more direct attempts to stimulate change – such as those advocated by Freire.

One aspect of social structure often targeted by activists is the pattern of collective organisation. The power of the more powerful rests not on their personal characteristics, but on their positions within networks of relationships and in social spaces that are key for decision-making over the allocation of resources. The less powerful are “organisationally outflanked” (Mann 1986: 7); they lack the institutionalised power to effectively resist. Therefore, writers have suggested that empowerment for the less powerful is related to the mobilisation of relationships and spaces; in short, for collaborative action of some form (e.g. Friedmann 1992: 15-36, Kaufmann and Alfonso 1994). Others, however, note that, while the bodies formed by such action may gain powers – as collective actors, so to speak – this does not necessarily empower all their members equally. The implications for individuals are related to just the sorts of
issues around the terms of engagement and participation in their decision-making spaces discussed earlier in the chapter (Mosse 2007: 32-35).

This discussion of empowerment suggests that, just as power relationships take many forms, have multiple faces and power is found in many different social spaces and works at various spatial scales, so change in power relations comes in many ways. Some aspects of change are unintentional and, in part, a product of social complexity, as changes in one place or sphere of activity have knock-on effects elsewhere. Sometimes they are the result of purposive social and political action. And of course, the two aspects will often intertwine in practice, as people purposively act to take advantage of wider, undirected processes of change. As the power cube model suggests, such action varies: it can use different forms of power (often simultaneously); it can work with various sorts of existing social spaces or channels of communication and interaction, or try to create new ones; and it can take place at different spatial levels, from local to international. As this thesis studies action taken explicitly at the local and community level, the next section will explore community further.

c. Community

If power is a fundamental element in the social sciences, community is, at the very least, a widespread theme, and one that has been present since the early days of modern sociology (Tonnies 1974). Again like power, the term is used in many different ways, including to refer to patterns of social interaction structured around a place of residence, workplace, or other interest (Crow and Allan 1994: 3); or as a cultural symbol, a concept which people use to shape their understanding of the social world, rather than reflecting that world in any simple way (Cohen 1985). While some argue that what unites the use of the term in relation to social structures, or cultural symbolism, is the notion of “belonging” (Delanty 2003: 3), or holding something in common with others, community may also be associated with particular felt qualities of interaction, whether actually experienced, or merely aspired to (Neal and Walters 2008, Baumann 2001). Thus in a similar fashion to the discussion of power, this section will review writing on community with an eye to uncovering conceptual tools useful for the study of Scottish community land ownership, rather than providing a comprehensive assessment of the literature.
Taking community seriously

The ubiquity and diversity of use of the word “community”, in the academic literature and in everyday life, point towards it as a serious topic for research. The abundance of studies that engage with the concept suggests that many social researchers do this. Nevertheless, there is within the field a note of debunking scepticism that risks being overplayed. Many authors begin their discussions of “community” by pointing out that the word is often used with strong normative connotations. It is seen as the “natural” form of social life, as a desirable social ideal, and as a social phenomenon under threat from modernity and its social processes - urbanisation, industrialisation, globalisation (Cohen 1985: 1-2, Day 2006: 12-18, Delanty 2003: 15-21). These comments are often aimed not only at academic sociology, but also at popular debate and public policy discourse. Newby describes the “thickets of emotion and sentiment” surrounding any discussion of the concept (Crow and Allan 1994: xi). Bauman (2001: 3) goes so far as to say that:

'community' nowadays is another name for paradise lost… or paradise still to be found; one way or another, this is definitely not a paradise that we inhabit and not the paradise that we know from our own experience. Perhaps it is a paradise for precisely these reasons.

It is, of course, important not to take talk of “community”, or any of people’s own descriptions of the social structures around them, and their history, at face value in any naïve way. Yet there are two important counter points to be made here. Firstly, it is surely an equal error to dismiss out of hand the use of “community” in people's interpretations of their situation, and regard all talk of “community” as utopian fantasising or nostalgia. Where there has been significant demographic, social and cultural change, people’s perceptions of change in social relations and/or shared cultural understandings might well be grounded in experience. Indeed, Day (2006: 21) notes that the cultural theorist Raymond Williams’ understanding of “community”:

reflects the social environment [he] had experienced when growing up in the 1920s in … rural South Wales… the experience of actually having lived through what appeared to be the retreat or even collapse of community was shared by others who adopted broadly similar criteria of the decent society.

If it is possible for academics to have a sophisticated understanding of the concept of community, developed in part from reflection on lived experience, it surely might be possible for many people, inside or outside academia. This does not mean treating talk
of “community” uncritically. It simply means that the relationship between “community” as meaning and as structure is best treated as an empirical matter, to be resolved case by case through investigation, and talk of “community” analysed seriously, rather than cut out of the data as mere background noise.

Secondly, some of the scepticism connected to the word “community” is linked to the suggestion that it is used as a tool of mystification, to mobilise the third face of power discussed above. Thus Newby draws attention to how policymakers apply a community label as a “veneer of sociability” to cover up the “impersonal” nature of policy initiatives and institutions such as the contracting out of mental health care (“care in the community”), or intergovernmental policy co-ordination (the “European community”). Levitas (2000) contends that community, and volunteer-based community associations, were central to the New Labour project as an alternative to state (Old Labour) or market (Conservative) approaches to solving social problems. Yet its use disguised both the continued power of the state in relation to crime and public order, but also the withdrawal of the state from social service provision.

Nevertheless, she also recognises that “community” is not always used as an ideological smokescreen for inequality or exploitation. Firstly, local volunteer-based organisations can provide services and meet real needs, and have been doing so long before the advent of neo-liberalism or New Labour (Levitas 2000: 194); indeed, in the various forms of the co-operative movement, they have long been associated with egalitarian politics (see also Woodin et al 2010). Further, the use of “community” in this movement, and more widely, while often utopian, has nevertheless facilitated thought, aspiration and action for social change – in other words, it has been used to build “power within” and inspire agency (Levitas 2000: 189-190). Again, this discussion illustrates the need for empirical researchers to be alert to multiple possible power implications of uses of the term “community”, rather than only seeking evidence of its use for one type of power relation, whether that be domination, or liberation.

**Community and power**

As a feature of social and cultural relations, community is easily linked to the study of social power. Firstly, social relations *within* communities affect the power of their members – and of those who wish to be members. Thus as social structure, power will be an aspect of the relationships between its constituent members. This can be taken at a
very fundamental level, in the sense that individual's sense of their selves – their subjecthood – is profoundly influenced by the social and cultural context in which they exist: some authors make the point that “individual”, just as much as “community”, is not a simple concept (Munro 2000, Lee et al 2005a). Then, power relations may be seen in more concrete or specific aspects of life. Thus, one feature of several commentaries on community is an emphasis on economic interdependence between members as central to sustaining communities as durable networks of relationships (Sennet 2008, De Rienzio 2008, Colls 2005). The plurality of these networks is important to note: any community will be composed of multiple networks, with individuals participating in multiple social spaces. Some may even talk of multiple communities within a larger community. Individual experience of, and power within, communities will therefore be structurally differentiated. And as a cultural symbol, the meaning of community, in any particular context, will form part of the third face of power. It will confer power and legitimacy on some people and practices, but not on others, through understandings of who is included in the community, what belonging to the community entails, and what kinds of relationships members have with each other and with outsiders. As Liepins notes (2000: 31-32) “meanings”, “practices” and “spaces” of community are all relevant to an understanding of power at local level.

Some approaches to understanding community take its structural and cultural power further, emphasising the homogenising and unifying effect of local social connections and their ability to generate collective power (or “social capital”). This is particularly associated with the notion that communities can exert a positive moral power over their members (Etzioni 1997), a vision that can be traced back to Durkheimian notions of societies functioning to integrate their members (Lee et al 2005a). However, such “communitarian” analyses are criticised from a more Weberian perspective for overemphasising commonality (at the expense of diversity and inequality) and structural power at the expense of individual agency (Levitas 2000: 192, DeFilippis 2001, Lee et al 2005a). Such critics advance arguments such as (DeFilippis 2001: 789):

communities are outcomes, not actors. They (…) affect and constrain future possibilities (…), but they are not actors that exhibit any form of agency.
Secondly, community may also be taken as a basis for the creation and exercise of collective power in relations external to the community, with other communities or with other entities entirely. Such power may be based on the concrete capacity for action of members of a community collaborating, whether this action takes the form of physical labour or some other co-ordinated activity - voting for a particular politician who has delivered something to that community, for example; or on the cultural power of representations of a community, which impresses or attracts other actors. If public agencies can use “community” to dress up their initiatives, as discussed in the preceding section, then so might actors at community level make use of the symbolic power of the term – working with the third face of power. Thus, Delanty (2003: 3) suggests different ways that perceptions of community can affect relations between those seen as community members, and external actors. Policymakers may see communities as distinct sub-groups of society, in need of external assistance; internally, members may see community culturally, as their self-identity in distinction from others; or politically, as the basis for collective struggles for justice. Others note how community may be interpreted as a reservoir of “social capital” that policymakers can draw on, or otherwise used as a vehicle in the implementation of public policy (Levitas 2000). Li (1996) notes, however, that it is possible for people to use such concepts of community strategically in their dealings with policymakers; not least when seeking to make claims regarding land rights. Ray (1998) suggests that the development of place-based identities and claims of community for external consumption – the “marketing” of a region economically – can also serve to create new identities locally: the creation of new symbolic meanings through community development. However, others again note how such attempts to create new identities may be contested. The existence of multiple identities and complex intra-community power relationships are important for the playing out in practice of such initiatives (Lee et al 2005b).

Community and place

“Community” may be used in a non-spatial sense when referring to communities of identity or interest, such as “the black community”, or “the business community”. However, a common usage is as “community of place”, a particular spatial and institutional level of the social world: “the local community”, wider than the family, smaller than the nation (Crow and Allan 1994: 1). This latter sense has long been
identified with small settlements in rural areas, but sociology has repeatedly “discovered” community structures and identities within the largest cities (Crow and Allan 1994, De Filippis and Saegert 2008).

Community land ownership explicitly connects the notions of “community” and “place”, and a brief exploration of this connection is therefore in order here. Notwithstanding the increase of virtual interaction made possible by contemporary communications technology, humans remain physical beings that are always somewhere, and to some extent share an interest in the place where they are with others around them (DeFilippis and Saegert 2008: 4). What this interest is may vary from one person to another, of course, and have implications for power relations, but it remains a place-based point of connection with others, if not necessarily a solidaristic connection.

The variance of interests and understandings shows how the concept of place has both social and cultural aspects, a theme developed by Woods (Woods 2010a, 2010b). He explores different types of social “attachment” to places, and different cultural meanings associated with places, and links these to differing positions on community action and place-based development. The social categories he employs are “native” (long-term family connections), “investor” (financially and emotionally committed), and “pilgrim” (emotional connection built up over repeat visits). He distinguishes four types of cultural connection: “sensuous” (linked to the physical environment), “performed” (associated with particular actions or lifestyles), “communal” (associated with human interaction or solidarity), and “symbolic” (as representing a wider concept e.g. 'rurality' or 'Scotland'). Differing emphases on these different types of connection is reflected in patterns of engagement with different types of community activity or local development projects: for example, “natives” tend to downplay “sensuous” characteristics of place compared to “investors” or “pilgrims”, whereas “investors” and “natives” may share an interpretation of a place as being significant for “communal” reasons (i.e. because they live there). Thus projects aimed at meeting social needs attract greater interest from “natives” and “investors”, while those aimed at the physical environment often generate interest from “pilgrims”, although presumably that interest may not always be supportive. In summary, this work points both to the diversity and complexity of people's possible attitudes to community and place, and the importance
of moving beyond simple “local” and “incomer” labels in understanding local power relations.

Having noted the importance of place and locality to community, it is equally important to remember that communities are not self-sufficient entities existing in isolation from the rest of the world. Analysis must avoid “the reification of a homogeneous and bounded rural society” (Lee et al 2005a: 252). As the discussion of the power cube in the preceding section noted, different spaces and levels of interaction are connected to each other. Community spaces are just one set of spaces in a web of many more. It follows, therefore, that an understanding of what happens in a community must take some note of how that community is connected to the wider world (DeFilippis and Saegert 1998: 2, DeFilippis 2001: 789-90). This may be through consideration of, for example, the patterns of economic activity which influence the material survival of community members, and in turn how this influences intra-community relations (Frankenberg 1957, Colls 2005); the relationship between demographic change and social and cultural aspects of community activity (Crow and Allan 1994: 67-89); or the influence of the state on patterns of local social and political organisation (Mohan and Stokke 2000).

Seeing community as situated in the wider world opens up the possibility of finding new perspectives on the role of projects of community development, and collective power building at community level. As DeFilippis and Saegert note (2008: 3, emphasis in original):

> it is a difficult and ambiguous question the extent to which problems in a spatially defined community are community problems – given that so much of what produces communities are relations and decisions that exist well beyond any single community.

Some respond to this challenge by downplaying the potential for local collective action, or at least insisting that it must be “scaled up” through alliances with others to have any chance of prevailing in conflictual power relationships with actors based outwith the community (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 261-3). The authors of the quotation above, however, go on to point to the continued relevance of action within place-based communities, in part simply because human beings' inescapably physical and place-based nature means that local interaction and organisation necessarily mediates people's
experience of wider structures and processes (DeFilippis and Saegert 2008: 3-4). Ray (1998: 4) coins the term “neo-endogenous development” to emphasise both the importance of local, “endogenous” initiative in place-based (or “territorial”) development projects, and the necessity of support and linkages with actors outwith the locality. It is clear, at least, that here are issues that any analysis of community and power needs to address.

**d. Conclusion: a framework for analysis**

The theoretical approaches to understanding power, empowerment and community discussed in this chapter suggest a number of ways forward for the analysis of community empowerment. This concluding section will set out a simple framework for analysis, establishing the key questions which will guide the research and the principal authors and approaches drawn on to answer them.

A range of issues in, and approaches to, the study of power have been discussed in this chapter. While reference has been made to more structuralist, and post-structuralist (perhaps “culturalist”) approaches such as that of Foucault, the analysis to follow will be based on a more actor-centred approach. Various attempts to integrate issues of structure and culture with an actor-centred view of power have been covered, notably Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and misrecognition. However, the recent work of Cornwall (2002), and in particular Gaventa's powercube (2006), drawing on Lukes, deals with many of the key issues around structure, culture and power while also being integrated with the analysis of institutions, of place and action at different spatial scales, and being aimed at understanding processes of change. This makes it particularly appropriate to the study of emerging place-based organisations such as community land initiatives, and it will form the basis of the approach used here.

However, it will also be modified, with complementary approaches to power being used to expand the scope of the analysis. As originally presented (Gaventa 2006), the powercube operates with an exclusively zero-sum, “power over” conception of power. This thesis will also study additive power, “power to” do things, drawing on Lukes' work on “powers” and “capacities”, and Mann's work on this (Lukes 2005: 69-74, Mann 1986). It will position additive power alongside the different “faces” of zero-sum power discussed in the powercube, and explore how all these are related to particular
spaces of engagement, and action at different levels of place. Further, the powercube does not explicitly address questions of resources, or the relationship between action in the economic, political, social or other fields. Mann's categorisation of types of power and resources (Mann 1986: 5-8), among others, will be drawn on to facilitate the analysis of power and resources, particularly important where the control of physical resources is at the heart of the study.

The next issue for the analytical framework is how to incorporate the concepts of community discussed above into the analysis of power and community land initiatives. Firstly, community can be seen as a spatial scale of action (although it will be a matter for empirical investigation exactly where the spatial limits of any given community lie). At the “community level”, while there will be many informal relationships and interaction spaces, the study of all of which may not be practical or essential for this research, there will be decision-making spaces in community associations and the like – as well as those of CLIs – that may be included in the study. Secondly, community can also be incorporated as an element of the third face of power: as an idea, or a symbol with meaning to people. Just what the various meanings might be, and what their power implications are, will be the focus of data collection and analysis.

The discussion of community above makes it clear that describing a group of people as a community based on one shared characteristic – for example, area of residence – does not mean that they necessarily share other interests, or even a common understanding of belonging to a community. They cannot be treated as a homogeneous unit or a collective actor, that can be empowered in any simple way. However, people do act collectively in the name of a community, at least for a period of time or in relation to certain issues. It may therefore be possible to treat community organisations as collective actors in their own right, and thus to study the extent and significance of their powers, and shifts in it. Further, it is possible that individual members of the community might be affected by the actions of a community organisation.

In the light of the above discussion of the framework for studying power and community, the thesis will therefore study two main forms of power and empowerment. Firstly, it will examine how community members additive powers – their “powers to” do things, as opposed to their “power over” others - have been affected by community
Thus it will study if and when individuals' capacities to pursue their interests are enhanced through, for example, the expansion of services or infrastructural provision, or the availability of finance. Where community organisations have been involved in direct flows of resources, provision of services, or the creation of infrastructure, the local distribution of these can be studied: who receives or uses them; how significant are they for those people? Answering these questions will require some understanding of the varying interests of community members. These will include not only material ones, but also the different meanings of particular resources or patterns of living to different people.

Secondly, it will study the creation of new opportunities for participation in decision-making over various aspects of local life. This might more directly bring zero-sum power relations - “power over” - and potentially conflicting interests into play. There is also, therefore, the possibility that some community members will see their power diminish as a result of the formation or actions of a community organisation.

The framework further suggests a focus on power and social relations within “community” social spaces. Particular attention in the present study will be given to those created by the community organisations in question: community land initiatives. Key questions will be: who participates in these spaces; on what terms do they participate, and who sets these terms; and what is their relationship to decision-making over the actions of the organisation, and the distribution of resources or other benefits more generally. The connections between these spaces, and other community level spaces, should be part of the study. And, as highlighted in the research questions, ideas about “community” might be significant factors in structuring these spaces: the range of local understandings of what community means will also be examined.

The model also directs attention to the relationships between spaces at “community” level, and at other levels. Some of these may be smaller than the whole community, e.g. spaces for interaction between immediate neighbours, even within households. But it is also important to look beyond the community, to engagement with power at wider spatial scales, and to ask: what is decided where? Here a mixture of geographical and institutional factors will structure the range of scales that are significant, which, in Scotland, may (or may not) include wider locality, local authority area, wider region,
Scotland as a whole, UK as a whole or wider still. Many local actors, both organisations and individuals, will be engaged in power relations outwith the local community. However, when studying the impacts of community organisations on community empowerment, it will be the engagement with actors operating at these wider levels by community organisations – and any effects that this has on the powers of community members - that will be of particular interest. Again, points to study are the interests and powers at stake in the spaces at wider levels, the terms on which different actors engage with each other in these spaces, and how these are set. And as with local level spaces, ideas about community – perhaps in its relationship to the private or public sectors – will form part of the cultural power patterns that structure interaction in these spaces, and should be included in the study.

To conclude, in the introduction to this thesis, the research question was set as: how does the creation of CLI decision-making spaces affect power relations at local level? And a secondary question was added: how does “community”, as structure, practice and meaning, affect CLIs’ impact on power relations? The analytical framework for this study can be summarised as consisting of a short series of subsidiary questions, and of approaches to answering them. Firstly, how have local people's additive powers been affected by the emergence and actions of community land initiatives: who benefits, and how? Secondly, how has local people's access to decision-making power been affected by the emergence and actions of community land initiatives: who participates, who does not, and why? Who do this benefit? Thirdly, how does this activity at local level relate to activity beyond the locality – where are decisions made, and who benefits? Answering these questions will require attention to be paid not only to “visible” interactions or conflicts explicitly concerned with power, but to how the “hidden” and “invisible” factors of social structure, and culture, influence behaviour and determine the significance of behaviour and “visible” outcomes for those involved. And throughout, the role of “community” will not be taken for granted, but examined as a key part of these structural and cultural aspects of power. The next chapter now moves on to discuss the operationalisation of this framework in the empirical research.
Chapter Three  Methodology

a. Introduction
The previous chapter ended by outlining an analytical framework; this chapter deals with how the framework was put to work. It details the decision to approach the topic via a case study; the choice of, and gaining of access to, a site for that case study; the gathering of data in the case study site and elsewhere; and the process of data analysis. Throughout the chapter, description of the process is combined with consideration of the methodological questions it raises. These include more general issues, such as the epistemology and ontology of qualitative and interpretative approaches, and case study research; and specific questions relating to the application of the analytical framework, and to the study of this case in particular. It concludes by reflecting further on some political and ethical issues arising from researching community land ownership, and the relationship between researchers and activists.

A final introductory note: as the chapter is directly concerned with the activities and ideas of the researcher, much of it is written in the first person, to make discussion of these issues clearer. After this chapter, the thesis reverts to the third person style for the presentation and discussion of the data.

b. Establishing the case study
The first step in choosing case study sites was the drawing up of a shortlist of CLIs to approach regarding my research. The selection of CLIs for my shortlist was based on criteria relating both to the group “in itself”, and to prior research into it. For the former set of criteria, I was primarily interested in establishing a clear contrast between two groups, whether that was in terms of size – of landholding or of resident population; geographical location (island/west or mainland/east); other types of landholding (crofting or non-crofting in the area), or other aspects. For the latter set, I hoped to conduct research on groups who had not already been extensively studied. This was for three reasons. Firstly, I believed it would make my research of greater value, compared to a study of a group for which there was already a substantial literature. Secondly, there were ethical concerns around “research fatigue” and the identification of community land with a few high profile groups. Thirdly, there were practical academic concerns that research fatigue might impair the progress of my research. I sought to direct my
attention away from the high-profile, heavily-studied groups towards others which I hoped would be equally interesting.

Populating the shortlist required information, on CLI activity and on research into it. From early on in the PhD I had taken note of where there were CLIs, what their activities were, and what kind of research was already available on them. I did this through searching the academic literature, observing the media, and in conversation with other people involved in Highlands and Islands development. In particular, I asked a number of HIE contacts with knowledge of the field for suggestions of CLIs that might be interesting to study.

In addition, as part of a research methodology course at the University of Aberdeen, I conducted a small telephone survey into experiences of research into community land (Braunholtz-Speight 2010). For this, I interviewed three community land activists whose group had been researched by academics, and three academic researchers with experience of researching community land. This confirmed my decision to avoid high-profile groups, whose experience of “research” went beyond published academic literature, and included frequent requests for time and information from journalists, undergraduates and school students among others. It suggested to me that the relationship between academic researchers and community activists required clear communication and care with information.

The exact shortlist fluctuated somewhat, but by autumn 2010, two (part-time) years into the PhD, I had established a two-stage plan. Firstly, I would conduct a short pilot study with the Abriachan Forest Trust, a small community near Inverness. The Trust was well-established, having purchased a forest in 1998; it was also logistically easy for me to access. Following the study, I would go on to contact two groups to be the subject of my main study. While I had not entirely ruled out asking Abriachan for this, at the top of the list were Stòras Uibhist, and Comrie Development Trust (CDT). Both of these appeared to be dynamic and ambitious community groups, if not as closely associated in the public eye with community land as the groups in Eigg, Gigha or Knoydart. They had both purchased substantial physical assets some years previously: Stòras was the largest CLI in terms of acreage (93,000 acres); CDT owned a former RAF base (Cultybraggan) on the outskirts of Comrie. Yet they were also in contrasting
geographical contexts: Stòras Uibhist in the Western Isles, and CDT on the border between Highland and Lowland Perthshire.

The pilot study with Abriachan went well, with two interviews and attendance at a meeting of the board of directors of the Forest Trust being easy to obtain, and activists welcoming. Nevertheless, I decided to proceed with my initial plan to contact Stòras and CDT, for three reasons: they were both much larger, more multi-faceted initiatives, serving a larger population, and I thought this might provide more ‘meat’ in terms of power and empowerment for my study; there were some signs of research fatigue at Abriachan, which was a relatively high-profile group; and one activist was unhappy about research involving the wider local community, fearing a reawakening of a controversy about the Land Reform Act from some years ago. While this person's objection did not lead me to rule out Abriachan as a possible case, it was clear that it might create difficulties. Access to the wider community was integral to my research design, and to the extent that this quite influential person could act as a gatekeeper, they might hinder my research. Equally, it is possible I might have been able to overcome their objections. (Nevertheless, this activist's concerns were in themselves interesting data to be noted.)

I contacted both groups, sending them a short summary of my proposed research by email (see Appendix One), and following this up with telephone calls. Through this process I arranged to meet with members of CDT in mid March 2011. I visited the town and spoke to staff at the CDT office, and a director of the Trust at their workplace, as well as talking to other local residents at the hostel where we stayed, and in a local pub. In conversations with the Trust, it seemed that the group was not hostile to the idea of being researched, but not particularly enthusiastic either. It was explained that they were awaiting the outcome of a grant application that would have significant financial implications for their future plans. If the grant was awarded, they would be happy to be researched; if not, their plans – and employees' positions – would be in jeopardy, and they would not be happy to make time for research. The grant announcement was made at the end of the month; the Trust were unsuccessful. I telephoned to ask if the situation had changed, but it had not, and it seemed that any research I did in Comrie would be without access to the organisation that I was hoping to place at the centre of my study.
My contact with staff and directors of Stòras Uibhist was entirely by telephone and email. Following my initial contact, I called and emailed a number of times in March and April 2011, sent a longer (four page) document outlining my research proposal, and spoke with the Chief Executive on several occasions. Despite assurances that my proposal would be considered, there seemed to be little progress in discovering whether the organisation would participate in my research, or what next step I should take (e.g. travel to the island to present my proposal in person). I noted that, despite my initial intention to visit sites which had been little studied, two other researchers had just completed similar studies in Uist over the winter (Bryan 2011, McMorran and Scott 2013). By May, I had decided to approach other groups on my shortlist.

My next approaches were to the two groups in the Sleat peninsula of the Isle of Skye: the Sleat Community Trust, and the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative. These groups were different from many of the higher profile CLIs in that neither had embarked upon a “whole estate” buyout. However, both groups were involved in land purchases, and had wide-ranging objectives and activities, offering the potential of rich material on multiple facets of power. That the two groups were operating in effectively the same geographical area held out the possibility of comparing different responses to similar challenges. Further, and importantly in the light of my failure to gain access to Stòras Uibhist and CDT, I had previous experience of working with both groups in Sleat: there was a relationship to build on. This was principally established through an international summer school which I helped organise in 2009\(^2\). The students had stayed on the Sleat peninsula at the Gaelic college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (a UHI partner institution), and groups of students had visited both the community land initiatives. During this process I had worked with directors of both groups to organise the field trips. Subsequently I had some contact with activists in the area through research into the working of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. All these factors led me to approach Sleat groups next.

As before, I emailed an inquiry together with an outline of my proposed research, and followed this up with telephone calls. Both groups discussed my research at their next Board of Directors meeting, and both confirmed that they were happy for me to undertake research into their organisation.

\(^2\) The International Comparative Rural Policy Studies (ICRPS) Summer Institute: [www.icrps.org](http://www.icrps.org).
Sleat in the context of community land and community assets more generally

As noted previously, neither of the Sleat CLIs have taken ownership of either of the two large private estates that dominate landownership in the peninsula. In that respect, they are different from those CLIs such as Eigg, Gigha, or North Harris that effectively own entire localities, either through the size of the acreages of land they hold, or by virtue of owning the whole of their island. Many of the existing academic studies of community land ownership have focussed on such “whole locality” CLIs (e.g. MacPhail 2002; Didham 2007; MacKenzie 2012; Skerratt 2011; McMorran and Scott 2013). Yet there are at least two reasons why research into the groups in Sleat can still be relevant to an understanding of community land ownership.

Firstly, the community land movement is not bounded and homogeneous. Its members are a fuzzily-defined subsection of a wider group of organisations that own “community assets”. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. For the methodology, the important point to note is that most community ownership, even in the remote rural areas associated with large scale community ownership, is not of entire localities covering thousands of acres. Instead it is of relatively small areas of land, perhaps centred on a key building or space – a sports pitch, community hall or shop, for example. Then, there are overlaps and grey areas, where “community land” shades into “community assets”. One such area is around woodlands – they are generally not the entirety of a locality, but a forest of several hundred acres is clearly a different sort of “tangible asset” from a village hall. Similarly, commonalities and overlap between “assets” and “land” activities are suggested by the practice of CLIs. Several are members of both Community Land Scotland and the Development Trusts Association, for example. This blurring of boundaries between the two categories may be increasing.

As will be discussed later, there have been few, if any, large-scale whole-estate purchases in the last 5 years. One research participant suggested that studying Sleat fitted with a:

“sea change in community buyouts” (...) no longer the big estates, but income-generating assets. This is because there’s no funding for estate purchases, and they're loss making. Also it causes problems to become a landlord, “got to follow the rules”.
(extract from field notes, interview with 'Joan', Sleat resident)
Research into organisations that hold small or medium-scale land or assets, then, might be of relevance to the understanding of a wide range of community groups across the broader community assets movement.

Secondly, CLIs, like any organisation, change and develop with the contexts they work in. This is as true of Sleat as of anywhere. The Sleat Community Trust was created to distribute revenues from a proposed windfarm; the windfarm was not built, but subsequently it has purchased a petrol station and a forest. Equally, the original Camuscross Community Initiative was not established in order to buy a reservoir for micro hydroelectricity generation; the opportunity was taken when it arose. Different opportunities may arise in the future. There have been changes in the management of both of Sleat's major estates in recent years. The peninsula has not seen an attempt at a whole estate “buyout”, but the possibility has been discussed. Again, the wider context mentioned in the quotation above (“no funding”) may change. It must be remembered, therefore, that the present study is situated in time as well as space. It concerns two community organisations at a time when they have become involved in the ownership of land and tangible assets as a means to achieve their ends, but are not the chief landowners for their respective localities. Their community land “career” may develop in this direction, or it may not. The research undertaken for this thesis can provide some insight into the workings of power and community in Sleat at this particular stage of the development of the peninsula in general, and the Sleat Community Trust and the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative in particular.

c. Conducting the research

*Fieldwork in Sleat*

While in Sleat I gathered a range of types of data. Much of the data gathering was in the form of qualitative interviews, which will be discussed in detail shortly. I also made use of direct observation of life in the peninsula in a range of social settings. Many of these were relatively informal. They ranged from friends and neighbours meeting in private homes, to more publicly open spaces such as interaction between residents in shops, at social events such as charity cafés or concerts, to regular socialising venues such as pubs. I travelled around the peninsula by bus, bike and car, and stayed in three different localities – Teangue, Aird and Tarskavaig – in order to vary my perspective on the patterns and practicalities of local daily life. My accommodation was twice in college
lecturers' houses – for the most part in Teangue, where one resident regularly took in lodgers – and once in a holiday house. (There appeared to be few options for short-term private rental, apart from holiday accommodation – houses or bed and breakfasts, both of which were too expensive to be used for a lengthy period of time.) Staying with these local residents was very valuable; they provided me with everything from basic local orientation to their own observations on community and land issues over the years.

As well as these informal social spaces, I made a point of attending a range of more formal meetings (see Appendix Five for a complete list). I attended directors' meetings of both the CLIs I was studying – on one occasion standing in for the usual taker of the minutes, and on another observing a meeting between the CLI and the professional team assembled to draw up plans for a community building project. I also attended a multi-group meeting called to discuss a response to the Scottish government's review of ferry transport. I further attended a number of public meetings, both those called by CLIs and others, and including one session of the Community Council.

I also made use of relevant secondary data. A wide range of documents were gathered both in physical and electronic formats, from local newsletters produced by various organisations, including the community land initiatives I was studying, to public policy documents by organisations such as HIE or the Scottish Government. Included in this was also the West Highland Free Press, which often featured the activities of the two CLIs in Sleat.

My interviews were a mixture of ethnographic and more formal interviews, and therefore, the routes by which I approached my research participants varied. I made use of the “snowball” technique, whereby one participant is asked to recommend others. Indeed, many people spontaneously suggested others I should hear from. I also observed community life, noting who was involved in various organisations (community, business and public sector), and which names came up in conversations, and then attempted to approach them – either through taking advice from existing contacts, or sometimes directly myself where possible. Finally, I made use of the opportunities afforded by living in various localities in Sleat, and using local services, to directly contact a number of people who did not feature on the lists of well-known or already-recommended names I was compiling.
From these references and impressions I drew up shortlists of people to speak to, and revised them throughout the course of the research. The shortlisting was based on multiple criteria. Some people were included as “key informants”, having played central roles in organisations, or had first hand experience of processes and events I was keen to learn about. Others were chosen to ensure I had a relatively representative distribution of participants across various categories such as age, gender, attachment to the locality, socio-economic position, geographical location in Sleat, and also non-participation. Regarding the latter category, I was particularly interested in interviewing people who did not actively participate in community land activities, or indeed any formally organised community activity, to avoid my sample being overly skewed towards community activists.

In total I conducted 54 formal interviews with people in Sleat, and “ethnographic interviews” - substantial but informal conversations on relevant topics – with a further 15 people. This gives a total of 69 people who participated substantially in the research, out of an adult population of 770 (Census 2011) – just under 10%. As the tables below indicate, of these, 60% were men, 40% women; they tended to be middle-aged or older, with almost two-thirds over 50, and very few under 30. While not exactly following the age profile of Sleat (see Figure 5.3), this sample profile does roughly correspond to it. They lived around the peninsula: I interviewed at least one person from almost every defined settlement. (I have not identified exact numbers in each settlement in the table, in order to respect confidentiality.) While research participants were mostly people who had moved to Sleat as working-age adults, I spoke to several people who were born and brought up in Sleat, and equally several who had moved late in life (and one holiday home owner). There was a mixture of people with relatives also living in the peninsula, or who had historical family connections with the area, and of people without such connections.

Lastly, Table 3.6 shows that while under half of my research participants were involved with the work of CLIs, my “sample” is still rather weighted towards those who have been active in CLIs, relative to their share of the population as a whole. This is unsurprising given the focus of my study, but must still be born in mind in the analysis of the data that follows: it may be that the work of CLIs assumes a greater significance.
in the lives of these people than it does for others in Sleat. Lack of awareness of this risks overemphasising the impact of the CLIs on local power relations. I endeavoured to counter this potential overemphasis on the CLI activists' perspective by hearing from people in a wide range of positions in respect of land and power in Sleat. Thus I interviewed senior representatives of both private estates; to current and past officeholders in the community council and various crofting grazing committees; and representatives of various public and third sector bodies outwith Sleat who had been involved in land and development issues in the peninsula. I was also careful to seek out people who had no involvement in any formal organisation, to ensure that I would gain some appreciation of the perspective of non-participants.

These do not represent everyone on my shortlists. For the most part, I did not interview everyone shortlisted simply because I ran out of time. I experienced few obvious difficulties with access to people in general. Contrary to several qualitative researchers' experiences (see e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 58-61), residents of Sleat seemed to have little difficulty in “placing” me, a research student, within their “social world”.

Sleat is a relatively well-studied place. Firstly, the presence of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which runs courses in anthropology, ensures a steady supply of students doing research. Then, during the course of my fieldwork, another researcher conducted a survey and key informant interviews as part of the official seven year evaluation of SCT funded by HIE (Bryan 2012, Bryan and Scott 2012). Further, SCT has a relationship with the University of Flensburg in the Netherlands, whose students visit once a year to conduct research into sustainable local development – which generally involves some questionnaire-based social research. Many people were willing to be interviewed for my research, and often asked “are you doing a survey?”. This familiarity with the experience of being studied probably made things easier for me, and did not seem to have led to generalised “research fatigue”.

However, there were one or two occasions where access was visibly difficult. One person only granted me an interview once it was clear that I was not doing this on behalf of any official group, nor with the promise that my research would “make Sleat a better place”. Sometimes interviews were refused outright; or sometimes people did not say “no”, but never seemed to have the time to be interviewed, which I interpreted as, in part, a reluctance to participate. During the course of my fieldwork, a number of people
told me that I wouldn't get “locals” to “say anything” - sometimes positioning themselves as spokespeople on “locals'” behalf. However, as well as these comments providing data in themselves on perceptions of community and power, the tables show that some people categorised as “local” in various ways did contribute to the research.

Interviews were arranged and named as interviews, and participants were handed an information sheet which explained the nature of my research (see Appendix Two) and guaranteed anonymity, while noting that I would be using quotations in my thesis. If interviewing formats can be conceived as a spectrum running from rigidly structured questionnaires at one end to completely open conversation at the other, my interviews were conducted towards the open end of the semi-structured part of the spectrum. That is to say, on the one hand, the same topics were not always covered in the same order. I allowed some space for following up on particular issues that seemed interesting or important to either me or the participant(s) in the interview, and for considering new angles and issues. Interviews also varied widely in timescales, taking from 30 minutes to more than two hours. On the other hand, in each interview, the general topic I was interested in was introduced, and I had a topic guide listing areas which I attempted to cover in each interview: people's involvement with the CLIs, if any; their opinions of them; of land and community ownership more generally; and community in Sleat – how they felt about it/them, any issues they felt were important, and how they saw the future. (See Appendix Four for the full topic guide.)

I also generally began interviews the same way, by asking participants to tell me “how they came to be living in Sleat”. An initial “easy” question such as this, on a subject of personal interest which participants will be confident they can talk knowledgeably, is often recommended in social research methods texts as a good way to get conversation flowing before moving on to more sensitive topics (e.g. Jones 1985: 156, May 2001: 131). Very often this worked well. Responses generally either took the form of an account of migration to the peninsula, with some outline of previous life history; or a genealogical account of family connections to the area and to Skye more widely. This gave valuable background information about processes of attachment to the place and the community. Yet I noticed during the course of fieldwork that this initial discussion of a “personal” subject such as “how you came to be living in Sleat” was not “easy” for

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3 Generally in relation to birth, childhood and genealogical roots in Sleat
everyone. For example, in a few cases, there were hints that the move to Sleat may have been precipitated by some kind of crisis elsewhere. As migration was not the main focus of my research, I did not probe where participants seemed to be leaving gaps in the story. However, researchers should bear in mind that it is possible that what is a less relevant “easy opening question” for one study might be the central topic of interest for another. However, it generally was an area on which people were at least accustomed to having to answer questions, and helped to make the transition from informal “small talk” to more focussed “interview”.
Characteristics of research participants in Sleat

Table 3.1 Gender of research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Age of research participants (estimated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>16-19</th>
<th>20-34</th>
<th>35-49</th>
<th>50-64</th>
<th>65 and over</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Current residential location of research participants: areas of Sleat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>West</th>
<th>Outwith</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 Community attachments of research participants: arrival in Sleat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrival Type</th>
<th>Born or raised in Sleat</th>
<th>Working-age in-migrant</th>
<th>Retired to Sleat</th>
<th>Holiday home owner</th>
<th>Not known</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 Community attachments of research participants: extended family...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Status</th>
<th>...in Sleat now</th>
<th>...in Sleat in past</th>
<th>...outwith Sleat</th>
<th>Not known</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>69</td>
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Table 3.6 CLI involvement of research participants

<table>
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<th>Active with a CLI</th>
<th>of which...</th>
<th>Active with other (but not CLIs)</th>
<th>No known involvement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active with a CLI</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active with a CLI</th>
<th>of which...</th>
<th>Active with other (but not CLIs)</th>
<th>No known involvement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active with a CLI</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: “Active” indicates participation in some formal capacity – for example as a Director, or a member of a working group or sub-committee. “Active with other” indicates regular “activist” involvement with other community organisations or campaigns.
I conducted a further fifteen “ethnographic interviews” - substantial conversations on the topics of my research, that were however not formally arranged or framed as interviews. And I had innumerable more casual conversations and contacts with many more people, at events or meetings, in the shop or the pub, in the course of visits to other informants' houses, and occasionally in the “street” - insofar as any of Sleat's scattered settlements can be said to have streets.

Of the 54 formal interviews, 27 were recorded – exactly half, although this was not pre-planned. For the rest I took notes during the interview and wrote these up as soon as possible afterwards. Typically interviews were not recorded because participants asked me not to do this: “I'll feel like I'm at the police station” said one, and others did not want their views recorded, despite my assurances of confidentiality. On two occasions participants asked me to turn the recorder off while they discussed particularly sensitive topics: I continued to take notes during these discussions. None of the “ethnographic interviews” were recorded, as I felt this would constitute an overt formalising of the conversation as an “interview” that might disrupt the flow of discussion, or lead to the participant ending the conversation entirely.

**Qualitative fieldwork: an interpretative approach**

The data gathered, therefore, were predominantly qualitative. This approach is based on an interpretive methodological approach. This approach draws a fundamental distinction between social scientific research and natural scientific research, based on the difference in their objects of study. Natural science is held to be concerned with inanimate objects that respond automatically to stimulus from external forces. Some social science methodologies see human behaviour likewise as automatic responses to interpersonal forces, with our conscious experience of choice a liberal illusion. In contrast, interpretative approaches are based on the belief that human consciousness is an important part of the world. Humans are conscious of their own existence and the world around them; they find meaning in it, or try to, through interpreting it; and their responses to stimuli will be, at least in part, related to these interpretations and meanings. This ontological position has epistemological implications. Social life can only be understood through the study that relates it to human consciousness and the meaning it has to people (Agar 1996: 2, Brewer 2000: 33-36, Bryman 2004: 13-15).
Such an approach does not require the abandonment of the study of broader social patterns for an exclusive focus on individuals’ interpretations. However, it does require that the study of social structures or patterns be accompanied by a study of the meanings which the people who populate these structures give to their actions (Brewer 2000: 34, Porter 2010, Hammersley 2011: 134-5). In this way, social research can be undertaken as a project seeking to understand the interaction between conscious meaning-making actors and unconscious patterned or structured features of social life, without trying to reduce one entirely to the other (Parker 2000).

Therefore, this study adopts approaches to power that do attempt to combine elements of subjective and objective analysis. Meanings and actions, individuals and structures, are all relevant to the study. Suggestions that the “third face” of power works to distract people from pursuing their “real interests” imply the reality of both subjective interpretations of the world, and of objective structures within it. The diversity of mechanisms for producing or changing “third face” effects implies connections between interpretations and structures. People's beliefs have causal force – what people think matters to what they do; but so do social structures – people cannot “wish away” the institutions and conventions of life that surround them. Any account of social life needs to account for both. The attempt to move beyond the expression of subjective preferences to identify objective interests may present epistemological challenges, as noted in the previous chapter; that does not mean that it is based on an unsound social ontology.

Nevertheless, that ontology does place limitations on the kind of knowledge that can be generated. If people's feelings and beliefs are part of the social world, a natural science model of research might aim at uncovering a true picture of these. Yet human self-consciousness is complex; and in addition, our only access to it is through interactions with other people and their presentation of themselves. As Kabeer notes (1999: 8):

> no research can adequately uncover, or even know whether it has uncovered, what people “truly” believe as opposed to what they say they believe.

Thus Lukes suggests that the way round this “classic hermeneutic or interpretive problem” (Lukes 2005: 113) is to limit knowledge-claims to being relative only to a particular interpretative framework (Lukes 2005: 148-9). In other words, the researcher
may outline particular social processes, the meanings their participants say they ascribe to them, and evaluate these in terms of power relationships; but the grounds of this evaluation must always be made explicit, and will be open to contestation, rather than being treated as ultimate “truths” to which researchers have “privileged access” (Lukes 2005: 149).

There remains a role in this study for some simple quantitative data at both local and inter-local spatial scales. Statistical data – on demographic change in Sleat, for example - were obtained from various official sources at various points during fieldwork and analysis, including Highland Council and Scottish Census Results Online (SCROL) websites. Data on croft tenancies in Sleat was obtained from the Crofting Commission. Other quantitative data was obtained from local documents or through observation and calculation. Thus at local level, the thesis reports quantitative data on e.g. funds disbursed by community land initiatives to other local groups, or on the composition of the local community in terms of various social categorising frameworks (e.g. occupation, place of birth). These can be useful in seeking to understand changes in the community and in power, by providing some information on the characteristics of the local population, the purchasing power of particular institutions, and so on. However, on their own, these are far from sufficient to answer the research questions. Neither would further quantitative analysis of the available data improve their utility significantly. In the interpretive tradition, quantitative data alone cannot be assumed to give a straightforward indication of the impact of particular activities or structures. More detailed qualitative data is needed to enable the analyst to situate quantitative changes in the complex network of local social relations and the subjective experience of the actors involved.

Much of the data presented in the chapters to come therefore concerns people's meanings and interpretations of situations and actions - such as patterns of land holding, or community land initiative's projects - and their understandings of concepts such as community. As Li notes (1996: 501):

'struggles over resources' are also 'struggles over meaning'.

Yet the study goes beyond recording individual impressions. It seeks to uncover themes and patterns in meanings and behaviour, and in turn to look at the implications for the
agency of others of these patterns – through, for example, examining the connections between understandings of “community” and engagement with particular projects of community land and asset ownership. It also concerns the patterns of behaviour, and unpicks, where the data allow it, connections between social structures and agents’ interpretations and responses.

A community study in context: fieldwork beyond Sleat
A feature of community studies is that each localised community has its own unique features, and no one community can be used either as a complete microcosm of society in general, or as “typical” of communities in general (Crow and Allan 1994: 195-6). It might be said that uniqueness is the one property they share. Community studies are therefore not suitable for case study research designs aimed at generating representative findings across a wide range of cases (Bryman 2004: 50-51). However, the term “community study” can mean several things. While it can be a study of one particular community, aiming at providing some holistic analysis of how it ‘works’, it can also be

“viewed as a method of study by which sociological issues can be explored within a local setting.”
(Hall 1990, quoted in Crow 2008: 133; emphasis in original)

A place-based community, then, can be used as the “setting” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 28-32) for social research, perhaps as well as any other. Indeed, in the present study, the use of a community study is perhaps better than many other settings. As the Scottish community land movement articulates its goals in terms of the empowerment of local communities, and the groups which make up the movement are organised at “community” level, a study at the spatial level of local communities seemed particularly appropriate for this research.

What is more, as discussed in the previous chapter, people do not live in completely self-contained locally-based social groups. Any one community may contain a multitude of sub-communities, or indeed overlap with other social structures at different scales. Members’ connections outwith their local area provide further basis for the claim that a community-based study can tell us about more than just that one community (Crow 2008: 133—4). The fundamental interconnectedness of social spaces at different spatial scales, or “places”, is also integral to the conceptual framework that
was built around the power cube model in chapter two of this thesis. The implications for the research design are twofold.

Firstly, the research in the case study communities was conducted with this awareness of the potential significance of wider connections, both to other communities, and to entities at different spatial levels. Here, the aim was to place the powers and empowerment linked to CLIs in the context of other power relationships with local significance. This is not a simple task. It clearly involves the study of extra-community relations, that cross the community boundary, however that boundary may be drawn. Yet further, the dynamics of the connections between intra- and extra-community relationships may be significant: how relationships within the community affect one's relationships outwith it, and vice versa. It will be apparent that a complete mapping of all community members' intra- and extra-community relationships is beyond the practical scope of this study. Nevertheless, the community level data collection and analysis was conducted with an eye to uncovering linkages and connections that are significant for the questions of power and community identified earlier in this study, and in particular related to community land issues.

Secondly, I directly studied community land activity beyond the case study area of the Sleat peninsula. This involved secondary data collection, using academic literature and a range of official statistics and reports, from public agencies and community organisations. It also involved primary research: a series of interviews with nine key individuals active in community land and empowerment beyond Sleat; and participant observation in some of the key spaces. Of these individuals, four worked for public sector agencies; two for national (Scottish) third sector organisations; and one was an independent consultant. Most of them had direct experience of working in or with Sleat groups, as representatives of agencies working at a wider scale. Their differing positions meant that I did not use a generic “outwith Sleat” topic guide to structure interviews, instead drawing up specific lists of issues to cover for each interview. I nevertheless ensured that I asked about the case study CLIs in Sleat in every interview, as well as about the broader community land movement; and invited research participants to comment on if and how Sleat’s local organisations were connected to institutions at other levels. As regards land reform spaces, I particularly focussed on those created by the community land umbrella organisation Community Land Scotland,
joining as an Associate Member and attending a launch event and three subsequent membership events. The aim was to explore how far CLIs are able to overcome the possible limitations of community-based action in a wider world, either through individually reaching out beyond their community, or through accessing collective power built up at wider spatial levels (by state or other organisations).

Finally, this thesis also draws on primary research carried out for the Scottish Parliament into the operation of the the Land Reform Act, in which I led on the investigation into Part Two of the Act, the Community Right to Buy (Macleod et al 2010). This research involved an online survey of CLIs; interviews with 18 CLIs (of which I carried out six, and analysed all); analysis of quantitative data provided by the Scottish Government Community Assets Branch and an interview with staff members; and a further five interviews with land reform experts. With regard to the data from CLIs, both the survey and interview sample were constructed to ensure data was obtained from groups with a range of experiences of using the Act, from those who had successfully purchased land using it, and those who had only completed some stages of the process, to those who had had applications rejected, and, importantly, including those who had pursued land purchase without using the Act at all. Two further interviews were conducted with CLIs who had applied to use Part Three of the Act, the Crofting Community Right to Buy. (For further details see Macleod et al 2010: 15-21.) While obviously primarily producing data on the workings of one particular set of spaces – those directly focussed on the Land Reform Act – this research yielded material on a range of other issues also relevant to this thesis, including local power relations and community capacities. This provided additional contextual data in which to set the case study data, especially as one of the Sleat groups had successfully used the Act to purchase an asset.

d. The process of analysis

The preceding sections having described the methodology and practicalities of data collection for the thesis, this section discusses how the data were analysed. It focusses on the central issue: the interpretation and analysis of qualitative data.

Fieldnotes were written up as soon as possible, often on the same day. Interviews were transcribed later. All interviews were transcribed by me. All electronic data - documents, field notes and interview transcripts - were transferred onto qualitative
analysis software (NVIVO). I should emphasise that at no point did I rely on the software to automatically generate codes, analytical themes or any sort of “findings”. Far from forswearing an easy option, using the software like this – as it suggests is possible - appeared to me to be extremely unlikely to lead to any useful results. Instead, all coding and further analysis was done “by hand”.

Initial coding of this data generated 490 separate codes. These codes were then used for some cross-referencing and analysis of themes by type of research participant. I also employed simpler methods of searching for codes and key phrases, and immersing myself in the data through repeated readings and searching through, manually as well as with the aid of the computer.

Some 168 of these codes were for named individuals: any material directly relating to them, either their own speech, or material generated by others but specifically about them. As far as possible, I added potentially relevant demographic and other information on these people: age, gender, occupation, when they came to Sleat, whether they had family connections to the area, whether their household had a croft tenancy or not, and – last but not least – their level of involvement in CLIs. For this latter, I distinguished between general involvement, and being a member of staff or a director – of one or both organisations in Sleat. The overall aim of these categories was to enable analysis both of social structural patterns – any signs of a relationship between social position and CLI involvement, for example; and of patterns in beliefs and attitudes, for example, between social characteristics and support for community land ownership. Then there were a number of codes related to other entities referred to in the data. Twenty codes related to places in Sleat (and a further 50 to places outwith the peninsula), 72 to organisations (around half based in Sleat), and 8 to local projects and events.

This still left 172 thematic codes for analysis. Although many of these were used only a few times, this still seems a rather high number. This arose in part through my pre-definition of many thematic codes, based on my analytical concerns, before beginning the examination of the data. For example, from the outset, I subdivided codes for material relating to “community” and “power” into analytical categories such as “community of place”, or “community of interest”, “visible power” or “hidden power” and so forth. Together there were 29 subdivided codes of these two key analytical
concepts. While some of these were added during the process of analysis, 19 were created at the outset.

In practice using this very detailed initial coding structure proved cumbersome, and while I did use the predefined subdivided codes, material was quite frequently simply coded under “power” or “community” in general. This was because often one small chunk of data – a short section of conversation, even one or two sentences, might quite appropriately be coded under four or five separate subdivided codes relating to “power” alone. Given an analytical understanding that the multiple facets of power and community are often entangled together in practice, this might have been foreseen, and further analytical elaboration of coding left for a later stage.

Further, to some extent, this prejudged the themes and structure of the data. However, this effect was mitigated by my limited employment of the full range of codes, for the practical reasons just outlined. And I am not suggesting that I should have started examining the data without any predefined codes at all, the kind of approach sometimes associated with “grounded theory”. I had a clear research focus, in the areas of power and community, as explored in earlier chapters. Yet a better combination of predefined and post-fieldwork coding might have been possible.

**e. Reflections on the research**

This section reflects on the design and conduct of the research in terms of ethical and political considerations, and in terms of the relationship between these, the methodological approaches adopted, and the type of data and knowledge generated by the research.

*Sensitivities around community land research: gatekeepers and the politics of access*

The initial phase of establishing a case study site for the research itself generated data relevant to consideration of the politics of land reform research, and the power relationships involved in my study. Failures to access Comrie Development Trust and Stòras Uibhist – and one interviewee's unhappiness about the prospect of me conducting interviews among the Abriachan community – suggest a number of sensitivities.

Firstly, there is a possible sensitivity that research might uncover “backstage” conflict and differences of opinion which might disrupt the “frontstage” performance of unity
that organisations often portray to the world – or, indeed, that communities often present to those deemed to be outsiders (Goffman 1980, Cohen 1985: 33). In a highly political and high media profile area like Scottish land ownership, such sensitivities are understandable.

On a related note, both community and private land ownership bodies have been responsible for significant data collection and presentation efforts in recent years, in part in response to successive Scottish government policy consultations (e.g. Bryan and Westbrook 2014, Hindle et al 2014, Community Land Scotland 2013, Scottish Land and Estates 2013, Kerr 2004). Other research in the field of community ownership tends to be sponsored by funding bodies such as the Lottery or HIE (e.g. SQW 2005, 2007; Bryan 2011, Bryan and Scott 2012, Campbell 2008). This is not to suggest that any of this research is unreliable, nor that funders exercise any undue influence on the presentation of results. Indeed, at least one prominent recent study (Glass et al 2013) that was funded by a private landowner produced results that dealt very evenly with different forms of land ownership, despite some commentators' reservations beforehand (Wightman 2012). Nevertheless, such debates indicate a role for research independent of policy or practitioner sponsorship – such as that conducted for this thesis, among others – in helping to promote critical scrutiny and debate about all land ownership arrangements.

Secondly, beyond that concern with the politics of external presentation, there is a possible sensitivity about the impact of the research within the community. In Abriachan, one immediate reaction to my suggestion that I interview widely in the community was “don't do that, don't stir up shit”. This reaction did not last, and members of the current Board of Directors were welcoming and encouraging to me. However, conflict within the community was described as “sad” and “destructive”, although viewed as inevitable up to a point. It became apparent that the conflict – which had broken out in relation to land reform legislation – was still remembered vividly by activists, despite having taken place six years previously. Indeed, one interviewee noted that conflict could take “sometimes whole generations to run out of the community”. The appearance of a researcher asking questions about land reform could be feared as a catalyst for the reopening of old wounds; even as suggesting to those “suspicious” of
the Trust, that the Trust directors were interested in pursuing the use of land reform legislation, despite having publicly disavowed this course of action.

Stòras Uibhist has seen a relatively high level of open, visible conflict compared to other CLIs. This was not explicitly referred to by my contacts there as a reason not to research. In Comrie, conflict was acknowledged, although again not explicitly presented as an obstacle. In my first meeting with the Comrie Development Trust, I mentioned having begun my research the night before by visiting a certain pub in the town: “Oh, they're very hostile in there!” was the amused reply of one staff member. However, the reason for CDT's unwillingness to cooperate with my research – activists being too busy dealing with a funding crisis – might also be interpreted as unwillingness to be put under the spotlight at a time when the group was under stress and it had bad news to communicate to the community.

Both groups in Sleat received my research proposal with less trepidation. Conflicts and differences of opinion within the community were acknowledged, but not felt to be a barrier to research. Indeed, on my introduction of myself and my research focus on land reform to one activist, the immediate reaction was “oh, you'll have an interesting time!” I was referred again to one pub in particular, where the regulars were said to be “kind of passive aggressive – with an emphasis on the aggressive!” in relation to community land ownership.

The social research methods literature is brimming with discussion of “gatekeepers” (e.g. Social Research Association 2003: 29, Shenton and Hayter 2004, Emmel et al 2007, Wanat 2008, Harvey 2009: 17): individuals or organisations that seek to control contact between researchers and the people the researchers wish to study. In the light of my difficulties in finding a fieldwork site, it might reasonably be asked why I put myself in the power of CLIs as gatekeepers. However, in the wider context of the research project – which looks specifically at power in relation to CLI spaces – I felt it was important to secure cooperation from the CLIs themselves. The study was to be as much a study of them, as it was of the whole community; without access to them, it would be significantly weakened. I did not approach any other local institutions prior to beginning my fieldwork – for example, churches, or community councils – as they were not as central to the research. I also made it clear, in communication with the CLIs and
with everyone else, that I was not conducting research on behalf of the CLIs. I wanted their cooperation with an independent research project – not their adoption of it as their own. This latter point was mentioned as important at the outset by SCT activists, who felt that it would make access to the community easier if I was not officially associated with them. As noted in an earlier section, my experience supported this feeling.

**Research ethics and the relationship between researchers, activists, and community members**

The nature of my research as an independent study of community land initiatives raises ethical questions about the relationship between me and the activists and local residents of Sleat. Those activists and other local residents who participated in the research gave of their time, for free, and discussed topics that were sometimes very sensitive locally. On what basis were these relationships established? And what responsibilities do they place on me as researcher and thesis author?

Activists generally had modest expectations of what they might gain from the research. It was suggested by activists with both CLIs that an independent enquirer might hear viewpoints and stories that people were reluctant to express directly to them. And what their work might look like to an informed outsider was of interest to them. They also appeared to feel that studies of their work were a useful form of publicity for it, and SCT in particular had collaborated with a number of external research projects. However, they did not expect the research to provide strategic guidance to them, or answers to any problems.

This was encouraging to me. My initial desire for my research to be “useful” in some way had given way to a more realistic appreciation of the limitations of my research in this regard. Some of the research that SCT has collaborated with – notably, into questions of sustainable development in Sleat conducted by visiting students from the University of Flensburg – had some direct operational relevance to the Trust, and was incorporated into a funded environmental initiative that ran under the Trust's aegis for several years (“Clean Sleat”). In contrast, my research, while in one respect directed at some of the issues at the core of community land activism – empowerment and decision-making - is more concerned with exploring connections between theory and practice, than with coming up with directly operational guidance. This thesis is written for an academic audience, and draws conclusions about how community, power and
politics work in local spaces in Sleat. Yet it does not make direct recommendations for e.g. changing the format of local elections, or encouraging people to participate.

Activists in the wider community land movement understood this position, while also pointing to it as a reason why they did not always view time spent collaborating with academic research as time well spent (Braunholtz-Speight 2010).

Participation by other local residents seems to have been largely a matter of goodwill. People gave their time freely; there was no sign of any expectation of payment. (Conversely, I was the recipient of much hospitality, from tea and cake to meals and lifts.) I have mentioned earlier that Sleiteachs were used to the practice of research, and this may have facilitated this ease of acceptance. My status as independent of SCT probably helped a little, and confusion regarding it was the cause of initial reluctance to participate from the person referred to earlier, who was happy to talk to a student pursuing their studies, but not to someone associated with the Trust or presenting research as being of benefit to Sleat. Some people were well known for being ready to speak their mind on local issues; being interviewed was maybe a continuation of this. Others were less prominent in public debates, but nevertheless willing to talk in private.

Reactions to my production of the voice recorder followed this distinction to an extent, with the former group much more relaxed about being recorded, often suggesting it was nothing new to them; the latter group were more wary. Yet counterexamples – prominent people who didn't want to be recorded, and less prominent people who were happy to be – occurred too.

This raises the issue of what happens to people's speech and actions after they have become “data” in my research. I have previously discussed the politics of community land research, and how activists feel that research which criticises their work could be used against them by political opponents – locally and more widely. There may even be risks to social activists in any academic analysis of their work, as an NGO activist quoted by Kabeer (1999: 1) said:

> I like the term empowerment because no one has defined it clearly yet; so it gives us a breathing space to work it out in action terms before we have to pin ourselves down to what it means.

What is suggested here is that the conceptual frameworks and interpretations of researchers may constrain as much as they enable the work of activists. Presumably this
would apply even for research that made positive moral statements about their work: it might still constrain their future actions, particularly if taken up by policymakers or funders. Activists prioritise the knowledge that they and colleagues have built up through practice, and judge it by its effect on their capacity for action and the results they see in their work – on their power in their field of activism, rather than by its fit with wider conceptual schemes, external validity and the like.

On the other hand, there was a clear preference for the results of the research to be available to local residents. This echoes the findings of my earlier research into community land research, where activists said that lack of feedback from researchers, once their interviews were complete, was a common and frustrating experience. In Sleat, several people wanted to know what and when I was producing from my research. One suggested that I deposit a copy of the thesis in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. My suggestion that I write, in due course, a brief “plain English” summary of those aspects of the thesis likely to be of local interest, and make it available locally, was well received (while posing additional challenges around sensitivity and confidentiality to me as author). An outsider's viewpoint was felt interesting - while at the same time some took care to remind me that my view would just be one among many.

If activists may worry about the political impact of research into their work, any participant might be affected by concerns about confidentiality. This is a serious concern in any research project, and can have particular implications in local community research. Concerns over confidentiality have led at least one recent community research project being curtailed, with a planned inter-site comparative analysis abandoned lest it reveal the location of fieldwork sites and, in turn, amplify the local conflicts researchers uncovered (Mann et al 2010). In my case, I decided that it would not be possible to anonymise Sleat as the case study area: the presence of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig alone was both too significant to leave out of the research, but also instantly identified the peninsula. I explained this at the start of every interview; an explanation that was often met with surprise or confusion that anonymising the location of the research might be thought desirable. (Some people positively wanted the area identified, including some local activists.) This was heartening, but also perhaps intensified the pressure on the confidentiality of individuals within Sleat.
I began every interview by saying that any notes or recordings I might make would be for me only; that I might quote people in my written work, but would never use their real names. It is notable that several people – often those with a reputation for speaking their mind – downplayed these concerns. “I'm not afraid to name and shame!” said one person in response to my interview preamble about confidentiality. However, people did sometimes ask me not to note or quote particular comments, or to turn the voice recorder off for a particular part of the interview (including, in fact, the person who was prepared to “name and shame”). I generally complied with these requests, while still keeping what was said in mind and noting it down in a more anonymised fashion; and turning the voice recorder back on as soon as possible. Many people did appear to be a little cautious in what they said, particularly when it came to giving names. More than once, a research participant first referred to someone by name, but then later in the same conversation used formulations such as “a certain somebody” - displaying a reluctance to name names, even when they had already done so.

One person challenged the practicality of combining confidentiality with quotations and analysing patterns in people's views. In this thesis, I have used verbatim quotations to aid in the accurate presentation of local interpretations of the issues I am studying. I have tried to preserve confidentiality by assigning false names to the research participants being quoted. The gender of the speaker has been preserved; otherwise, I have attempted to use names that will not give any clues as to the identity of the person being quoted. I have occasionally given other details about the speaker – place of residence, status as a CLI activist, or as a crofter – when it seemed particularly relevant. Any element of further information does, however, make speakers slightly more identifiable.

There also remains the possibility that the use of typical phrases or styles of speech will destroy the confidentiality of quotations. I have attempted to redact some of these from some quotations, where not necessary to the sense of the passage. However, it is difficult to entirely eliminate the possibility, particularly among a relatively small population, that some people may be able to identify some of the speakers of the “anonymised” quotations in this thesis. On the other hand, for someone to be identifiable from their phraseology suggests that their speaking style is well known; and in turn, that their views may also have been aired in public already.
The research instrument: my position as a researcher of community land

The discussion of the subjectivity of interpretations earlier in this chapter clearly also has implications for researchers' own interpretations and positions (Brewer 2000: 38-55). Therefore, and as the researcher is “the research instrument par excellence” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 19), a brief reflection on how my identity, experience, beliefs and conduct might have affected the research is in order.

My interest in community land ownership stemmed from an interest in both the region and the idea. I had a holidaymaker's familiarity with the Highlands and Islands; I also had a more general hope that social inequalities in the UK (and elsewhere) might be ameliorated through the decentralisation of power over resources, and promotion of local democracy. I was, therefore, in principle well-disposed to community land ownership at the outset of the research. Such an attitude towards the subject of study is fairly common among researchers, as Edelman (2009: 250) notes:

> Virtually all university researchers who study or accompany social movements are profoundly sympathetic to the activists' goals.

However, the influence of these perhaps naïve foundations on the research was tempered both by my formal education in politics, and my experience as researcher and campaigner on a range of UK and international issues. Firstly, I was aware of my own preconceptions, and shared with Chollett (2001: 296) the feeling that:

> Scholars enamoured of struggles for democratisation and social justice often present an overly optimistic view of contemporary social movements.

I saw the research, in part, as a means for me to get beyond such preconceptions and develop a deeper understanding of the issues. Yet I also framed the research as exploratory, rather than testing a hypothesis, in an effort to avoid it becoming merely a test of my own preconceptions: these were always likely to prove superficial, and testing them yield only the trivial results of defeating a “straw man”. Secondly, living in the Highlands (albeit urban Inverness), and working in social research there, helped me being to appreciate a different understanding of the area, and a different associational map, to that of the hillwalking holidaymaker.
My experience of doctoral research has certainly deepened and enriched this awareness of multiple perspectives. I was conscious while writing the thesis of trying not to let my attraction to the idea of community ownership interfere with the analysis of the data. On the one hand there was the risk of not being properly critical; on the other, the risk of over-compensating for my position and seeking out opportunities to demonstrate my critical stance. Such issues are common to many researchers' relationships with social movements (see e.g. discussions in Edelman 2009 and Chollett 2011). I still am reasonably favourably disposed to community land ownership, but with, I hope, a deeper and more sophisticated view of the strengths and limitations of dreams of democratic communities and resource control.

How did this affect the conduct of the research? I have detailed earlier how Sleiteachs were accustomed to the presence of student researchers. From my accent I was clearly English, and my background middle-class; but this is not unusual in Sleat. I had effectively no Gaelic language ability, beyond a few phrases. While some people clearly felt I should make the effort to learn more, for others this was irrelevant – and for some it may even have helped mark me out as not affiliated to the “Gaelic crowd”. (In any case, it would have been unlikely, in the time that I had available during my research, that I would have been able to attain a level of Gaelic proficiency to be able to conduct in-depth interviews in the language.)

It may often have been assumed that I was supportive of community ownership – certainly one participant, 'Iain', several times broke off from his highly critical account of it with wry statements like “this might not be what you want to hear, but it's a fact!”. But, again as previously mentioned, I was clear that my research was my own, and independent of SCT: in interviews and conversations, a wide range of opinions about community ownership were expressed to me by a wide range of people. While inevitably affecting the focus and conduct of the research, my social and theoretical positions, as reflected upon above, did not appear to preclude the gathering of the data necessary to address the research questions.
f. Conclusion

This chapter has detailed how the theoretical concerns and analytical framework developed in Chapter Two were translated into active research and analysis. It notes that the interpretive methodology, that underpins the analytical framework and the empirical research, limits the knowledge claims that can be made on the basis of this research. The thesis presents interpretations, made using a particular framework, of a set of data generated in particular social circumstances. These relate to a social world that is real, but, by virtue of its complexity, and being composed of both objective and subjective aspects, is not comprehensively knowable by any one member of it. The conclusions it draws must be understood in this light, and seen as potentially fallible, while still representing a serious effort to uncover aspects of that social world, rather than to invent them.

It concludes by reviewing some issues around the politics and ethics of the research. The research is itself an intervention in the power relations around CLIs, potentially affecting perceptions of them, and individuals, both within local communities, and in other spaces of importance to CLIs.

The thesis now turns to the presentation of the data generated by the research. Before moving in to focus on the local level, it begins “beyond Sleat”, exploring the wider power relations and spaces connected with the community land movement.
Chapter Four  Sleat in context: community land ownership beyond the local

a. Introduction

This chapter discusses the wider context of the community land movement in Scotland. It covers the recent history of debates about land and community in the Highlands and Islands; outlines some of the contemporary development issues in the region; and goes on to examine some of the key spaces and relationships through which the community land movement has been built. These include both typically closed or invited spaces, such as those of national legislatures, executive policy-making or funding agencies, and those spaces created by movement activists and organisations themselves. While some parts of the chapter are structured in chronological order, this is merely in order to better situate different developments in their relationships to each other; the chapter does not aim at providing a comprehensive history of the community land movement. Rather, the purpose of it is to build up a picture of the fuller web of relationships, spaces, and the means of power accessed through them, which constitute the wider community land movement – in order to better understand the local action which will be covered in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

b. Social and cultural context: land and community in the Highlands and Islands

McCrone notes (2001: 40) that:

the first Scottish government elected in May 1999 let it be known that land reform was to be one of its key priorities, something which in England would cause considerable puzzlement.

This section of the chapter considers some of the factors, historical and contemporary, which have made community land reform a major issue in Scotland today.

Historical context

While there are extensive debates as to just how land tenure systems operated in the Highlands and Islands before recent times, most commentators are united in seeing profound changes in land tenure and ownership over the 18th and particularly 19th centuries. These changes, from a more or less communal, clan-based system, to a modern market-based system, accompanied the still greater upheaval of the
incorporation of the region more closely into the rest of British political, economic and social life. While the region had gradually become more integrated since the early 1600s, with official initiatives such as the 1609 Statutes of Iona (Bingman 1991) accompanied by the action of more diffuse power in the form of economic and cultural interaction, the process was forcibly accelerated following the defeat of the Highland-based Jacobite rebellion in 1745-6. British military power was established over the clans, and a deliberate effort made to weaken Gaelic culture. The result was that, as Devine puts it (2006: 15):

traditional society moved from tribalism to capitalism over less than two generations.

Previously, when the region was a largely autonomously-governed part of Britain, military power had been key to clan politics. Land was key to the maintenance of a large population, and therefore a large fighting force and a powerful clan (Hunter 2000: 41). In the new capitalist context, chiefs saw land more as an economic resource; profit, rather than population, was to be maximised. There were profound consequences for the people of the Highlands and Islands. Firstly, there was widespread displacement, as the best land was allocated to sheep farms, and people were resettled in new villages, often on poor coastal strips. Secondly, there was economic vulnerability, as livelihoods became increasingly dependent on trade with external markets in a limited number of commodities. Economic cycles, potato famines, and the continued power of landowners over tenants, produced destitution, and many people responded by emigrating, either to the New World or the growing cities (Devine 2006: 198, Hunter 2000). Around the middle of the 19th century, much of the region had begun what would become decades of demographic decline.

Linked to this was the third change, the incorporation of the land of the region into the existing global land market. While rent payments and local land sales were nothing new, the selling of land to outsiders was. Yet this occurred on a grand scale as Highland chiefs, faced with mounting debts and falling incomes, transformed themselves from clan patriarchs to landowners – and sellers. Devine calculates that over a million acres of the western Highlands and Islands was in the hands of new proprietors by the end of the 19th century (Devine 2006: 189). Decision-making power over land had shifted from chiefs and their entourage, resident and enmeshed in local social and economic
relations, to landlords, often not resident and not dependent on local communities for either social or economic resources.

While this change is certainly remarkable, it is also notable that what did not change was the scale of landholdings. A chief might not sell off the entire clan territory, yet the areas sold were large: the Macleods of Macleod, for example, were “forced to sell Glenelg” to clear their debts (Devine 2006: 188). In part this must have been for simple financial reasons: the value of their land relative to the size of their debts forced Highland proprietors to sell large areas. Yet it also indicates that there was a demand for these areas. Seen as an agricultural resource, the region's land was clearly not a huge asset; yet it was becoming increasingly valued for cultural reasons.

The Highlands and Islands have long been regarded as a region distinct from the rest of Scotland, but the perception of the region from outwith has shifted from threatening and degenerate “Other” to romantically impoverished relation. This had important consequences for the pattern of land ownership. This shift is generally traced to around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and related most immediately to the popularity of various literary accounts of the region: Johnson and Boswell's tour of the Highlands and Islands, the novels of Sir Walter Scott, the “Ossianic” poetry of James MacPherson. More generally, it is suggested that it was a product of the conjunction of the rise of the Romantic movement in European culture, and the rapid improvement in transport and communications, which “opened up” the region to the rest of Britain (Devine 2006: 206-7). It gained further pace with Queen Victoria's enchantment with the Highlands later in the nineteenth century. The Victorian-era cultural shift in attitudes towards the Highlands from the rest of Britain took a particular expression in Scotland, where the region and a number of associated symbols – tartan, whisky, lochs and mountains – became symbols of Scotland as a whole (McCrone 2001:39-41).

This fashion led wealthy people from outwith the region to seek ownership of Highland estates, not for the profits they might generate, but for their recreational value. The most prominent recreational activities were the “field sports” such as deer stalking, fishing and grouse shooting, and landholdings managed to facilitate them emerged, the “sporting estates”. A Highland sporting estate was also a status symbol: again, Queen Victoria participated in this trend by acquiring the Balmoral estate in the Grampians.
Counterposed to these perceptions is a quite different perspective, exemplified in the work of Hunter (2000). This sees the Highlands, not as magnificent and changeless wilderness, but as a tragedy of depopulation, caused by greed and inequality. (Another strain of environmentally-focussed history, most associated with Darling (1955), sees the region as an ecological tragedy.) The focus is on the experience of the less powerful majority of the region's residents, and their response to the shifts in economics and land ownership which were occurring, for the most part, without their participation in the relevant decisions. Aiming to counteract the impression that the population of the Highlands was acquiescent or apathetic in the face of these changes, they highlight the efforts that people made to regain some power in their lives, whether through emigration as a conscious choice, or through protests against Clearances and the actions of landowners. These protests brought UK government response in the appointment of an inquiry into the problems of the population of the region, the Napier Commission; and the eventual passing of the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886.

The former conducted a remarkable exercise in holding public hearings into living conditions throughout the region. With crofters' representatives being given, after the intercession of the Commissioners, assurances that their testimony would not lead to their eviction, the hidden face of landowner power that might usually prevent crofters speaking out in public was effectively countered. The hearings provided a very “frontstage” space for the airing of the kind of views and grievances usually reserved for discussion “backstage”; for the turning of “hidden” into “public transcripts” (Scott 1987). Among the elements of these views that made the strongest impression on the Commissioners were the belief that “the small tenantry of the Highlands have an inalienable title to security of tenure”, a belief that the Commission's report described as “indigenous to the country though it has never been sanctioned by legal recognition” (cited in Hunter 2000: 220).

The latter defined crofting legally as a system of tenanted agricultural smallholdings (“crofts”) with unusually high degrees of security and power for the tenants (“crofters”). Thus croft tenancies were heritable; crofters were protected from eviction; and rents were fixed at the value of the bare ground, i.e. improvements to the croft by the crofter could not be captured in increased rent. The system was organised around spatially defined “townships”, where individual crofters held both their own land (a
croft) and a share in communal land (common grazings). The common grazings were administered by a local grazings committee, composed of all local crofters (the shareholders in the grazings), of which one would be the Township Clerk, responsible for locally administering the system and convening the committee. The system extended to the six “Crofting Counties” of Argyll, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, Orkney and Shetland. Highland areas of Perthshire and Aberdeenshire, despite having some tenant smallholders who called themselves “crofters”, were excluded.

**Contemporary context**

This section considers the broader context within which the community land ownership movement has emerged and is working. The first point to note is the persistence of the legacy of the 19th century transformation of the region. Scotland is often described as having one of the most concentrated and unequal patterns of landownership in the world (Bryden and Geisler 2007: 28, Wightman 2010: 78-9, Glass et al 2013: 65). On the one hand, patterns of landownership in Scotland as a whole, and the Highlands and Islands, have changed over the last century. The government is now a significant landowner, particularly in the form of the National Forest Estate, and a number of government-owned crofting estates (on the islands and in Sutherland) (Wightman 2010: 108-9). Recently the community ownership movement studied in this thesis has emerged. There are now over half a million acres of the Highlands and Islands under the control of CLIs (Hunter 2012: 191, McMorran and Scott 2013: 140). This represents a modest percentage of the region as a whole, although within some areas, particularly the Western Isles, it is more significant: around 40% of the land area, and the majority of the population (Black and Leeman 2012: 12, Mackenzie 2012: 4). Furthermore, private landownership has become less concentrated. Nevertheless, private ownership is still estimated to cover 83% of rural Scotland, and there are more than 100 private owners who hold over 20,000 acres. The great majority of these holdings are in the Highlands and Islands (Wightman 2010: 106-8, 115-120).

The role of private land ownership in relation to Highland economic development is widely debated. Many suggest that large landholdings offer the possibility of engaging in multiple and diverse forms of economic and social development activity, and ecosystem management (McGregor 1993, Kerr 2004, Glass et al 2013). Some argue that
large privately-owned “estates” contribute greatly to local economies, bringing in tourist revenue and tending to multiply this effect through using local businesses as suppliers and contractors (Kerr 2004). Others suggest that estates do not maximise their economic potential (Higgins et al 2002), perhaps simply because they are (Wightman 2010: 168):

an indulgence for wealthy people who like hunting. They are uneconomic because they were never designed to be economic.

Those involved in the estate property market (George Goldsmith, quoted in Nicholson 2010) occasionally echo this latter viewpoint:

'It's a lifestyle thing,' says Goldsmith. 'You don't run a sporting estate as a business.'

This latter statement by a leading land agent for the region – specialising in sales and management of Highland property - cannot be taken as representative of all Highland landowners. Some do run estates as businesses, and in any case not all landholdings in the region are “sporting” estates primarily dedicated to hunting. Yet research does suggest that making a profit is rarely a strong motivation for landowners of Highland estates to hold their land, although economic factors such as minimising expenditure or losses may loom large in estate management decision-making (MacMillan et al 2010; McKee et al 2013: 77; Wagstaff 2013: 93-8).

The current pattern of landownership gives private landowners power in various ways. Most obviously, ownership rights give them substantial decision-making power over the use of the physical space of the Highlands and Islands, in the visible face of power (McGregor 1993). Owners of large land holdings often played a prominent part in political spaces beyond their locality: some sitting in the UK House of Lords, or occupying key posts in Highland local government (Glass at al 2013: 23, MacKenzie 2012: 37).

There are possible effects through the third face of power also. There are the cultural effects of long-lasting social structures, whereby what is actually the case may come to be identified with the limits of possibility. Thus the dominance of recreational motivations for landownership, which has persisted for over 150 years (McKee et al 2013: 66), may lead some to conclude that that is all the Highlands can sustain in the
contemporary world. The holding of decision-making power in the hands of a relatively small number of landowners is likely to produce a range of reactions in other residents of the region: while some of these, as will be seen, were antagonistic, the full spectrum of responses to or rationalisations of powerlessness discussed in the literature review earlier might be expected. Indeed, Scottish Land and Estates itself suggests (2013: 24) that, while the power of estates over their local communities has declined over the last century:

there are, however, still some cases where some functions of estates and rural businesses, especially in remoter areas, are still regarded in a quasi-local authority context.

As well as these unintended impacts, such power may be used more consciously as well. Thus it is argued that landowners used their cultural power, and their agenda-setting power, through participation in several decision-making spaces in government and the “evolving countryside lobby” (Lorimer 2000: 424), to preserve their powers over land in the face of arguments for change from some conservation and development advocates. The sparsely settled, or entirely people-free, landscapes resulting from the 19th century upheavals were naturalised as “a pristine and preservable Highland wilderness” (Lorimer 2000: 424); the laird as custodian of tradition (Lorimer 2000). Scottish Land and Estates continues to use the language of environmental stewardship, for example in its submission to the Scottish Government's Land Reform Review Group (Scottish Land and Estates 2013).

Crofting also survives, as a localised collective land management system in a region dominated by large-scale private ownership. The legislation has been amended several times since 1886, with perhaps the most significant change taking place in 1976, when crofters gained the right to “decroft” part or all of their croft land for fifteen times the annual rent, freeing it up for non-crofting uses e.g. the building of houses. Crofters have considerable rights over the use of croft land, and crofting is a powerful cultural symbol in the region, as will be explored further in later chapters. It's future is much debated, however (and has been for some time!). While much of the literature on common property regimes focusses on preventing overexploitation, it is deterioration through declining use that is the “core problem” for Scottish common grazings (Brown and Slee 2002: 18, Jones 2011). Jones (2011: 47) reports survey data indicating that the financial
return on labour time invested in crofting livestock production is “well below the minimum wage”, and suggests (2011: 48) that:

Given the small absolute income delivered by grazing systems and the small return to labour expended, not least in comparison with wages in the wider economy, it is little wonder that activity levels are low (...) to do nothing is perfectly rational.

In contrast to the demand for land for subsistence of crofters in the 19th century, this calls into question whether crofters' powers over land are relevant to their “strategic life issues” any more; or at least suggests that, if they are, this is not because of the value of their land as an agricultural resource.

The system has been administered by a succession of Crofters Commissions, with directors (“Commissioners”) appointed by government. Recently (2011), the body was renamed the Crofting Commission, and elections for Commissioners were introduced. The change in name was intended to signify a shift in focus towards the interests of crofting as a system, rather than of crofters as individuals. Arguably, the change to elected Commissioners balanced this by providing existing crofters with some power over the direction of the Commission. For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that of the nine Commissioners, three were still appointed by government; and of these three, two were residents of Sleat, and one very active in one of the CLIs included in the case study.

If debates over landownership and crofting continue to dominate discussion of the “Highland problem”, so does population. Population decline is perhaps the single “fact” that dominates recent debates about Highland development: a central feature of the “Highland problem” (Munro and Hart 2000: 10, MacKinnon 2002: 311, Darling 1955). Here there has been change too, however: recently the population of the region has been rising (OECD 2008: 13). This is largely due to in-migration, both from elsewhere in Scotland, and from the rest of the UK (Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) 2010: 14). However, within the region the pattern is uneven, with some areas seeing growth (including Skye and Lochalsh), while others – notably Sutherland and the Western Isles – suffer continued decline. There has been a relatively high proportion of retired people moving in, while younger people leave for work and education, exacerbating the imbalance in age structure compared to the rest of Scotland, particularly in more remote
areas (Scottish Agricultural College 2010: 9, 13; Highlands and Islands Enterprise 2011a: 4). HIE states that this demographic trend, in combination with “dispersed settlement patterns”, is “a challenge for the area” and “makes the delivery of services more difficult” (HIE 2011a: 4). Most of the region is classified by the Scottish Government as “remote rural”, based on dispersed settlement patterns and travel time by road to towns. While this category of area does well in terms of neighbourhood satisfaction, low crime - and also wealth - it does badly on “geographic access to services” (Scottish Government 2012a).

As these comments suggest, these demographic features of the region have implications for public policy, particularly in relation to service delivery, and economic and social development more generally. Small businesses account for the majority of employment (HIE 2011a: 1); tourism and the public sector are the biggest industrial sectors (HIE 2011a). In Skye, Lochaber and Wester Ross tourism is particularly important and this may account for the heavy seasonality of employment patterns in the area (HIE 2011b).

Dispersed and low density settlement patterns, ageing demographic structure and distance from major centres of population have direct implications for individual people in the region also. One way of understanding the impact of low population densities and remoteness is to see them as resulting in diminished access to the diffuse power of the social and economic infrastructure of wider society. The effects of this diminished access can be seen in the monetary costs associated with everyday living. In some instances, remoteness may reduce these – notably, house rents may be lower. And in some other cases, for example postal services, costs are the same, because a government policy decision has been made to give access to social infrastructure at the same cost across the whole country. However, many other items are more expensive and difficult to access in remoter areas. Food and other goods and energy are all more expensive than in non-remote areas; travelling to access work, shops and services is a significant household cost, and a car is regarded as an essential of life (Hirsch et al 2013, Shucksmith et al 1996). Maintaining a similar standard of living to people in non-remote areas therefore requires greater individualised power – typically simply through greater access to money. It has therefore been suggested (Hirsch et al 2013: 52) that:

High living costs restrict who can live in an area at an acceptable standard (...) this creates the prospect of communities consisting only of well-off residents.
and people living in unsatisfactory conditions who are unwilling or unable to move elsewhere. These are not conditions in which communities are likely to thrive.

Note how the implications are discussed not so much in terms of social justice or equality, but in terms of their “impact on community sustainability” (Hirsch et al 2013: 52). This may reflect the priorities of the report's writers; or, perhaps, their perception of how policymakers view these issues, and the kind of language which will command attention. In a sense, this is a manifestation of the cultural power of “community”. A new element appears to have crept into the “Highland problem”; not just the challenge of maintaining population numbers, but that of assuring “thriving communities”.

While this section has shown some continuities between historical and contemporary power relations around land and community, there are clear differences also. As has been shown, the economy of the region has changed; agriculture has been replaced by tourism and the public sector as the major employer. Material living standards have risen greatly and in general are higher than in urban Scotland (OECD 2008: 12). However, overall figures can mask inequalities, between and within localities in the region. What also persists is the sense of the region as being “distinctive” (OECD 2008: 117); perhaps of it being a “problem” region in need of intervention.

Most notable, perhaps, is the transformation in governance institutions at many levels. While for much of the twentieth century the UK government included a specific Scottish Office, this was an executive rather than legislative body, and as such a closed space for the people of Scotland. However, following the election of a Labour government in 1997, a process of devolution was initiated, which in Scotland led to the formation of a Parliament and Executive with wide ranging powers, including in relation to land ownership and rural development. At regional level, local government was reorganised in the 1970s, seeing the creation of a large Highland Council, and for the first time a distinct authority for the Western Isles, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Prior to this, the Highlands and Islands Development Board had been established in 1965.

From the outset, the issue of control over land was seen as important for the HIDB, and the Board was endowed with powers of compulsory purchase of land, where it could demonstrate that this furthered development (Lloyd and Shucksmith 1985: 119-120). However the Board found these visible powers unworkable due to “hidden”, second
face of power, constraints. Firstly, the Board was not sufficiently resourced to pay the market price for land, a condition of the use of the powers (Lloyd and Shucksmith 1985: 120-121). Secondly, it received legal advice from the Scottish Office that any attempt to use the powers would be defeated in court. The Board had legal power to acquire land only in the first dimension of power, but not in the second; and even had its legal powers been sufficient, it then lacked economic power to realise them.

Following difficulties with landowners on Mull and on Raasay, the Board approached the UK government, through the Scottish Office, to seek greater powers over land. The Scottish Office agreed that the powers were inadequate and that it was not necessary to attempt to use them to demonstrate this. Accordingly the Board submitted a report to the UK Government in 1978, setting out the case for further powers. However, the then Labour government did not reply before losing power in the 1979 General Election. In 1980, the new Conservative Secretary of State for Scotland replied that no further powers would be forthcoming, as the Board had not attempted to use its current powers (Lloyd and Shucksmith 1985: 121-4). (The Conservative government was, of course, in general actively promoting the extension rather than the curtailment of private ownership.) The power of the UK government over the HIDB was affirmed; shifts in power inside the Scottish Office, as a result of shifts in power at the UK level more generally, prevented change at the regional level in the Highlands and Islands.

The Board was renamed Highlands and Islands Enterprise in 1990, in line with the then Conservative government's emphasis on business and enterprise. It continues to pursue a dual remit of economic and social development, with its four priorities for 2012-2015 including “strengthening communities and fragile areas” and “supporting businesses and social enterprises...”, alongside sectoral growth and low-carbon (HIE 2013b). This broad remit is also reflected in the structure, with a Directorate of Strengthening Communities alongside Sector and Business, and Regional Development Directorates (HIE 2013c). Reflecting the history of perceptions of the “Highland Problem”, the Highlands and Islands remains the only region of Scotland with its own regional development agency: the rest of the country is served by Scottish Enterprise, whose business plan and structure focusses on economic growth and business, with little mention of social enterprise or “community” (Scottish Enterprise 2013).
c. Creating spaces: the making of the community land movement

While local collective ownership of land in the Highlands and Islands did not begin in the 1990s, that decade marked a clear shift in the form, volume and pace of such ownership initiatives. This contemporary wave of community ownership can be traced back to the 1970s at least. This decade saw a resurgence of popular activist interest in changing Highland landownership patterns. In 1972, John McEwen, a professional forester, published “Who Owns Scotland”, a groundbreaking attempt to uncover and publicise the ownership of all the land of the country. The following year, John McGrath's 7:84 theatre company performed his play “The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil” to audiences across Scotland, from village halls in the Highlands to the SNP party conference. The play dwelt on the history of the Clearances, and drew parallels with contemporary control of resources – within the Highlands, and for Scotland as a whole (the oil of the title). And in 1976, historian James Hunter published “The Making of the Crofting Community”, a book that provided academic support for those advocates of crofting perspectives on recent Highland history.

As detailed above, the latter half of the decade also saw serious but unsuccessful attempts by the HIDB to compulsorily purchase privately-owned land for Highland development. Yet alongside these, the Board was also exploring different avenues for locally-driven economic development that did not require large-scale land purchase. It supported efforts to build a network of community cooperatives, the Co-Chomunn. This programme was sustained into and beyond the 1980s, demonstrating some policy autonomy within the overall political climate of the time, and also providing first steps into local development management for several people who would go on to be CLI activists.

The Conservative government policy and rhetorical emphasis was on non-intervention in the workings of market: certainly there seems to have been little appetite for interfering with patterns of private landownership. However, the focus on “rolling back” the state did open up some spaces for discussion of change in land ownership, as various state agencies and departments were landholders of considerable stature. The Forestry Commission was of course the largest, but not the only one. Thus, in the late

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4The few existing local ownership organisations, including the Stornoway Trust (established in 1923) and in Glendale (among others) took a diversity of forms, and had not precipitated any rush to emulate them.
1980s, the Department for Agriculture and Fisheries (Scotland) (DAFS) was looking at selling off the crofting estates that it owned in the Highlands and Islands. It commissioned a pilot study to examine the feasibility of doing this for its seven estates on Skye and Raasay. This report recommended the transfer of the estates to a trust managed by and accountable to the tenants on the estates. However, when the Scottish Office presented the report locally and organised a vote among tenants as to whether to proceed with this transfer along the lines indicated, the result was a clear vote against transfer.

Macphail (2002: 278-283) explains this as a consequence of four factors: little desire for change among the tenants because the government having been a “good landlord”; suspicion of any initiative suggestive of privatisation of public assets coming from the Conservative government; fears that transfer would lead to lesser entitlements to grants and public funding; and the proposed structure, having all seven estates managed jointly, raising fears among tenants of each estate that they would be taking on responsibility for assets (the other estates) they were not familiar with, and the politics of inter-township cooperation with people they did not know. She describes the consultation process as “heated”, and the “no” vote as “a bitter blow” for “imaginative strategists and crofters leaders”, amongst whom were the leadership of the then Scottish Crofters' Union (MacPhail 2002: 281).

All these initiatives discussed, whether visible power struggles – the HIDB's wrangles with land ownership, the DAFS consultation - or others working more with cultural power, such as John McGrath's play, helped keep land ownership alive as a political issue in the Highlands and Islands. And concerns about the instability of private ownership on Gigha and Eigg were raised in the House of Commons in the early 1990s (Wightman 2010: 145-8). It was, however, the 1992 campaign by the Assynt Crofters Trust to purchase the North Lochinver Estate that is often represented as the beginning of the contemporary community land movement in rural Scotland.

The Trust was formed by members of the Assynt branch of the Scottish Crofters Union in response to the North Lochinver Estate being offered for sale for the second time in three years. The Vestey family had sold the estate (formerly part of the larger Assynt Estate) in 1989 to a Scandinavian company, who went bankrupt in 1992. The Estate was
offered for sale, as part of the liquidation process, in seven lots. Crofters in the area felt that the previous change of ownership had led to a deterioration in estate management, and were alarmed at the possibility of such “fragmentation” of ownership (MacAskill 1999: 39, MacPhail 2002: 276).

The Trust consciously engaged with different faces of power. They engaged in the market with direct negotiations with the estate agents. Simultaneously, they tried to lower the price of the land and scare off other potential purchasers through the innovative use of crofting legislation, threatening to collectively exercise their individual rights to buy their crofts; and they also sought public funding for a purchase. Furthermore, they used culturally-orientated spaces to try to “define the situation” (Goffman 1980), engaging with the media from the start and publishing a carefully worded fundraising appeal. They contrasted the estate agent's language of wealth and wilderness with their vision of Assynt as a community of ordinary people. In short, they were successful: in December 1992, their third offer, of £330,000, was accepted and in early 1993 the Assynt Crofters Trust were handed the title deeds to the North Lochinver Estate.

The Assynt case was significant for future community land and asset activity in a number of ways. Firstly, the ACT quickly assumed a remarkable role in the promotion of community land ownership, both indirectly as inspiration, and through direct contacts with other groups. They were also consulted by the Scottish Office in 1995 over proposals to transfer government crofting estates to community trusts (Chenevix-Trench and Philip 2000: 3).

Secondly, the Trust's engagement with the media stimulated wider interest in issues of land, community and power in the Highlands and Islands. The Trust made effective use of the third face of power, drawing on cultural themes about community, locality and the moral rights of crofters to the land in their media campaign. Thus one press release (quoted in MacPhail 2002: 292 – emphasis added) commented that:

Some crofters described as "outrageous" the fact that if a crofter wanted to assign his croft to his son he would need the written permission of the new landowner even if he was a Surrey bank clerk.
They turned the language used in the sales documents to their advantage, highlighting one passage in particular (quoted in MacAskill 1999: 45, and MacPhail 2002: 273):

One need only enter Assynt to see the great sphinx-like mass of Suilven to sense the atmosphere of unreality, almost fantasy, which permeates even the character of the people who live there. Mountains (...) serve to emphasise that man himself is perhaps the alien element in this landscape.

At least one subsequent press article covering the Trust's campaign was headlined “Assynt 'aliens' not for sale” (MacPhail 2002: 335). The sales language seems to have caused offence in the area. MacPhail (2002: 275) quotes several indignant responses to this passage from Assynt residents, including:

They would like to make a wildlife park - and we're the wildlife.

Thirdly, this was the first case of the adoption of the company limited by guarantee as the institutional framework for community land ownership. The ACT established themselves as a company, with local crofters as the shareholders with voting rights. This decision was based on advice from Simon Fraser, a Stornoway-based solicitor who had researched appropriate legal structures for community land ownership as a co-author of the DAFS consultation report (above), and who also acted as legal advisor to the ACT. They used the “limited by guarantee” structure in order to both limit liability to directors, while also being able to limit membership (avoiding absentee shareholders) and keep shareholding to one share per member, non-tradeable.

The company structure was also used by the ACT to present themselves as the embodiment of “enterprise” (MacPhail 2002: 332) to public agencies such as HIE. In general, the ACT displayed an expertise in adjusting their presentation of self to different audiences. Thus while in some encounters they emphasised “professionalism” and “enterprise”, in others it was “history” and “justice”. One activist has suggested that their public disavowal, in their fundraising Appeal document, of “political and romantic sentiment”, was regarded as “a kind of open joke” (MacPhail 2002: 340-1).

The ACT buyout is illustrative of the role of crofting in providing an institutional structure for Highland communities to build collective power for ventures such as land purchase and management. The Crofters Union branch provided the 'space' for discussion and development of the idea, and the wider Union the contacts with a key
advisor. Crofting Grazings Committees provided the basis for the post-acquisition organisation of the Trust management. This has implications for the power relations developed through community action, and the idea of community that it represents. Most obviously, in the case of ACT, membership of the Trust remains limited to crofters (i.e. persons holding a croft tenancy). Other local residents cannot join.

Several other community groups acquired their local land in the 1990s. Some of these did so through relatively amicable transfers of land between private owners and crofters. Thus in 1993 the crofters of Borve and Annishader in Skye formed a company limited by guarantee to take ownership of their inbye and common grazings land, in order to pursue a crofter forestry scheme, with the encouragement of their landlord. The landlord pointed both to his family's history as sympathetic landlords, who had “never evicted a tenant”, and to the high cost of administering land under crofting tenure, relative to the low rental income it yielded (Reid et al 1996: 39-41). The local grazings committee, that negotiated a price with him, drew on advice from the Assynt Crofters Trust and Simon Fraser, and financial support from a local office of HIE and from the Highland Fund in Glasgow. However, the majority of the purchase price of £20,000 was raised directly from the crofters themselves (Reid et al 1996: 42).

Another notable transfer took place in Sutherland, where the owner of Hope and Melness Estate, Michael Foljambe, offered to gift the crofting lands of Melness to the local crofters in 1995. An initial meeting of crofters called to consider this offer was addressed by a representative of the ACT, and voted to respond positively to the landlord. The crofters delegated to negotiate the details of the transfer were pleased to hear that Mr Foljambe was reviewing and fixing fair rents – in practice, raising the rents – prior to the transfer. They felt this would be beneficial for the new community body, increasing its income without involving it in local political difficulties or rent disputes. On the other hand, they also noted that some of the more lucrative parts of the bundle of property rights were not offered unconditionally. The fishing rights were not included at all, and the sporting rights had to be leased back to the Hope part of the Estate, which Mr Foljambe's family would retain. Nevertheless, they felt this latter condition at least offered some guaranteed income; and the offer was unanimously accepted (Brennan 1999).
These two cases received some media and political attention, but it was the community campaigns for ownership of the Isle of Eigg, and the Knoydart Estate on the mainland opposite, which raised the profile of community land ownership the most in the 1990s, and proved more important to the future growth of the movement. Eigg had become notorious for underdevelopment and tension between the then landowner, millionaire Keith Schellenberg, and members of the community (Campbell 2001). Schellenberg spoke publicly of how he liked the “rundown Hebridean feel” of the island under his ownership (McIntosh 2004: 164). Knoydart had a history of local agitation for land rights in the 1940s, and a succession of frequent changes of ownership – some triggered by bankruptcy and fraud trials – left estate workers sometimes without pay, and infrastructure deteriorating.

The first visible initiatives at taking over Eigg came from outwith the island: Councillor Michael Foxley suggest the Highland Council purchase it in 1989, and in 1991 a group of Scottish activists founded the Isle of Eigg Trust to do this. In 1996 the Council entered into a formal partnership to buy the island with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and a reconstituted, islander-controlled Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (Hunter 2012: 86-90). Like Assynt, the majority of the funds had to be raised through an appeal to the general public, but with HIE now prepared to provide the “last brick in the wall” of funding (Campbell 2001, Watt 2012), in practice just over 1% of the successful bid of £1.6m. In Knoydart, another partnership - between the Highland Council, local residents, conservation organisations, and the neighbouring private estate – formed the Knoydart Foundation and finally bought the estate from its creditors in 1999. Funding for the campaign and buyout was from a mixture of public appeal, HIE and third sector sources, including those of the partnership organisations (Hunter 2012: 103-105).

These cases show the community land movement developing in several ways. Firstly, there is the increasing interest from policymakers and, in connection with this, the increasing availability of public funding to support community ownership. However, such funding was still far from sufficient to buy a whole estate, which in part drove the second development, the formation of formal partnerships to take ownership. While the Assynt Crofters Trust consulted and worked with other organisations, they had considered and rejected the possibility of actually owning the land in partnership with others (MacPhail 2002: 361). In the cases of Eigg and Knoydart, some external
Another development in the late 1990s was community group interest in forestry. In Abriachan, just south of Inverness, local residents succeeded in buying an area of forest from the Forestry Commission for Scotland (FCS) after protracted negotiations were finally resolved by a shift in FCS policy towards dealing with communities – variously attributed to then Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth MP, or the FCS' own internal deliberations (research participants in Abriachan and FCS). Another model was developed in Laggan, where a group entered into a partnership arrangement with FCS to manage local forests.

**Building collective power: the development of a community land movement**

In the 1990s there appears to have been considerable informal networking and communication between CLIs, with members of the Assynt Crofters Trust in particular travelling to talk of their experience to other communities where land ownership was on the agenda. Activists also informally coordinated their work on broader issues, establishing the McEwen lectures on land ownership, and lobbying over the Land Reform Act: one recalled that “we had a good game plan” (contribution to CRRS roundtable on Community Assets, November 2010).

However, it took some time for the movement to shift from informal and issue-specific collaboration to more institutionalised cooperation. On the one hand, groups joined existing third sector network organisations, such as Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS). At least one joined the then Scottish Landowners' Federation (now Scottish Land and Estates), the organisation for large-scale landowners. On the other, there were a number of gatherings of CLIs organised, including a high-profile conference, the “Fling in the Fank”, marking the 10th anniversary of the ACT buyout in 2003. And there was an attempt to set up a “Community Land Action Network” (CLAN) in the early 2000s (MacPhail 2002: 531-2) but this does not seem to have lasted very long.

Arguably the first umbrella organisation arising out of the community land movement was the Community Woodlands Association, formed in 2002. This now represents
almost 200 groups across Scotland – most owning some woodland, but some would-be owners, and others involved in woodland management or use in partnership with the owners. Their interests are diverse and range from amenity access or environmental concerns, to promoting woodland crafts and heritage, to commercial timber production (CWA website).

Some years later, the subject of more general collective organisation of CLIs was raised again, in the context of fears that political interest in community landownership had declined and that the movement was stagnating as a result. A conference was convened in Harris in March 2010, with the support of HIE, and attended by several community landowning groups, as well as support agencies. From this a research project on the possibility of establishing an umbrella body for community landowners was launched, which surveyed potential members and reported later in the year in favour of establishing such a body (Bryan and Campbell 2010). Community Land Scotland was launched in Inverness in the autumn of 2010, and held its inaugural conference in March 2011, again in Harris. Subsequent conferences have been held in Mull in 2012 and Skye (Sleat) in 2013 and 2014. Membership, which stood at 17 at its launch, has grown to 45 (CLS 2014a); and while initially all the members were from the Highlands and Islands, there are now several members from outwith the region.

CLS has two main levels of activity: Scotland, chiefly with Government; and local level with existing or would-be community landowners. The first involves engagement with organisations that are external to CLS, and mostly public sector organisations. The second involves engagement with CLS members, but also with potential members. Regarding this, CLS activists see the organisation as having a role in discussing community ownership with groups and communities that are in the early stages of considering the idea.

Concerning engagement with Scottish level institutions, CLS has been remarkably successful in achieving some of its initial members' top priorities (CLS 2011a: 7-8), which included the establishment of a new Scottish Land Fund and renewing political interest in further land reform measures – a Land Reform Review was set up by the Scottish Government in 2012. The appointment of a sympathetic retired senior politician to the post of Advocacy Director seems to have been important in bringing
the organisation knowledge of what are the key decision-making spaces at Scotland level, and how power relations within them work. For example, knowledge of internal budgeting processes and timescales can be crucial in relation to effectively lobbying for the allocation of public funding.

CLIs are members of a number of other umbrella organisations. Several are members of the Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS), and Sleat Community Trust acted as regional agents for DTAS for a while. Also in Sleat, members of Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative reported that the DTAS annual conference had been an inspirational event for them. DTAS is formed of a mix of rural and urban based groups, many of which own buildings but not large areas of land. Sleat Community Trust is also now a board member of the Community Woodlands Association, which is perhaps the largest community assets membership organisation in Scotland, with over 200 members (CWA 2013: 2). Finally, as noted above, some CLIs have joined Scottish Land and Estates (SLE). One CLI said that SLE, as a well resourced organisation, offers excellent technical support and political briefings, as well as appearing to have a strong relationship with the Scottish government: a useful space to participate in. All of these diverse affiliations suggest that many CLIs take an instrumentalist as much as an identity-based or political campaigning approach to which wider organisations they join, and which spaces they seek access to.

**Scottish community land ownership today**

Today the original groups – Assynt Crofters Trust, Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, Knoydart Foundation - still own the land. There have been others, even larger-scale in some cases, that have joined them at the political and media edge of the movement: among these are the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust, North Harris Trust, Stòras Uibhist, and Assynt Foundation. It was from among the activists of these large-scale CLIs that the impetus to form Community Land Scotland came.

However, the contemporary community land movement is more diverse now, and, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, falls within the wider category of “community assets”. It is argued that in Scotland as a whole (CWA 2013: 3):

the classic “whole estate” buyout is atypical, and a relatively small part of a much bigger picture.
Indeed, while 17 large-scale CLIs account for around 95% of the 463,000 acres held by community organisations in Scotland, it is estimated by DTAS that there are 2718 community organisations that own tangible assets in Scotland (Black and Leeman 2012: 1). The mean acreage owned by the 2701 smaller-scale organisations is therefore just 9 acres. The great majority of these are community hall associations, whose typical acreage owned is likely to be lower again; but this figure also includes community housing associations, and a range of development trusts and community companies that own housing, sports centres, heritage centres, multi-purpose woodlands or recreational greenspace. These latter categories account for some 340 assets owned by 287 organisations (Black and Leeman 2012: 4-6). Further, the great majority of these – large or small - are in areas classified as “remote rural” (Black and Leeman 2012: 13)

Even those economic and political mechanisms most associated with large-scale community land ownership have actually been used for a much wider range of purposes. Thus, the Scottish Land Fund, so associated with a small number of large-scale “buyouts”, actually made awards to 188 organisations (SQW 2007: 2). Several of those groups that have successfully used the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 were purchasing quite small acreages of land – one of the present case study groups, the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative, is among them. The membership of Community Land Scotland, while initially centred on large-scale CLIs in the Highlands and Islands, has widened in recent years to include several smaller-scale groups, including both those on Sleat.

These varying groups pursue a variety of projects – Black and Leeman number some 36 categories of asset use (Black and Leeman 2012: 8). However, some patterns of activity can be discerned, and a brief discussion of these is helpful to set the data on the case study groups in Sleat in context. Firstly, Black and Leeman relate Aiken et al's (2011: 6) threefold categorisation of community asset-owning groups into “stewards”, “community developers” and “entrepreneurs” to their survey results. They suggest that “stewards” are typified by many voluntary community hall associations, “community developers” by groups running a more multipurpose centre, and “entrepreneurs” by a large-scale CLI engaged in multiple economic and social development activities (Black and Leeman 2012: 7). Although they do not offer any estimates as to number of organisations in each category, it seems clear that most CLIs, larger or smaller scale,
will be in the community developer or entrepreneur categories. Another term, advanced by DTAS among others, is the “anchor organisation”. This is defined (Henderson 2013: 2) as an organisation which works across the range of challenges that a community itself defines and faces (...) in order to generate an integrated and community-led regeneration action plan. These challenges may include the environment “built and natural” (Henderson 2013: 2), social and economic development.

What this suggests, in terms of the analysis of power and resource use, is that these organisations have created spaces in which decisions are taken over the use of multiple means of power. Again, an overview of CLI engagement with different means of power highlights some general patterns. Thus many larger-scale groups pursue economic development, with two aims: to achieve financial security for the organisation, but also to facilitate wider economic growth in the local area. The former may be pursued through directly engaging in economic activity; the latter through enhancing community members' additive powers to do so for themselves (MacPhail 2002: 499, McMorran and Scott 2013: 159-161).

So, while CLIs inherited varying asset bases on taking ownership, it seems that some at least report that they have begun to generate a profit on previously loss-making estates, and no longer use public funds to cover their core costs – for example, Knoydart, and Stòras Uibhist (Hunter 2012: 110, 162). Often this has been helped by renewable energy generation, which CLIs tend to undertake directly rather than facilitating other initiatives. The Eigg and Gigha groups have earned significant income from wind energy, helping to cover core costs and development work, with off-grid Eigg also solving its energy security problems (previously reliant on importing costly diesel for generators) (Mackenzie 2012: 127-128). The largest scale economic development activity has been undertaken by Stòras Uibhist, who have recently begun both generating electricity at their own 6.9MW wind farm on South Uist, and put together a £9.6m funding package for a redevelopment plan for Lochboisdale Harbour, which aims at facilitating future economic growth by making the harbour a deepwater port for marine energy developments (McMorran and Scott 2013: 156-8).
Then, looking at wider economic growth, CLIs tend to emphasise the number of business start ups in their area, rather than their own economic performance:

Some people think this is some kind of bolshevik thing, revolution underway (...) but, actually, all the evidence is that community owners encourage private investment within their communities, they want private business to thrive (...) Doesn't all have to be done by the communal level, providing you're facilitating the growth of the economy. ('Angus', community land movement activist)

Thus, around half of the members of Community Land Scotland report that they are currently involved in local business support activities – providing premises, encouraging inward investment, or other measures aimed at supporting local entrepreneurs (CLS 2013: 5). The growth in private enterprises under community ownership is also highlighted in a recent CLS-commissioned report (Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 2).

CLIs themselves also often point to demographic indicators - the retention or growth of population - before all others, as evidence of their impact (e.g. Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 1-2, McMorrnan and Scott 2013: 146, Campbell 2008: 32). This may include a focus on school rolls and children as indicators of “demographic sustainability” (Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 2). CLS research suggests that localities under community ownership are more likely to have seen population increase than other comparable areas in the Highlands and Islands (whilst also showing that there is variation across all forms of ownership - Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 2-3, 25-27).

This focus suggests an underlying conception of the community as a whole as an actor. Size of population is clearly one key measure of “health” of the actor in this perspective. It is recognised, however, that many other factors contribute to community survival; they can be seen as “strategic life issues” for the community. These include economic opportunities, as discussed above, but also several others related to community members' “strategic life issues” and to the community as a whole, in terms of its internal relations, and its ties to place.

Thus, social service development is also a feature of many groups' work. Housing has been a priority for several larger-scale groups, particularly those in Gigha, Knoydart, Mull and North Harris (Satsangi 2007). It is estimated that the longer-established CLIs
have built 39 houses, upgraded 151 existing houses, and released 141 housebuilding plots; it is suggested that they view this as “very important for population expansion” (Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 11). Four CLIs have between them also created 17 new crofts, including woodland crofts on Mull (Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 12). The Knoydart Foundation also built housing for temporary use by seasonal or fixed-term contract workers, having identified this as a constraint to local development (Knoydart Foundation 2012). Some CLIs have built or upgraded community facilities, such as village halls, but it is noted that this work is mostly carried out by “other community groups” (Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 11).

Environmental work is widespread across many CLIs, large and small scale. This may focus on managing ecosystems for biodiversity goals, and ranges from planting “native” trees to culling goats (MacKenzie 2012: 84-91, McMorran and Scott 2013: 154). Some CLIs have signed management agreements with Scottish Natural Heritage (including North Harris, and the Assynt Foundation), while for others – notably ACT – this has specifically been rejected. CLIs have also undertaken environmental work relating to recreation and tourism: building or upgrading paths, and other measures aimed at facilitating visitor access to and appreciation of the land (Bryan and Westbrook 2014: 11).

Some CLIs have also undertaken projects relating to the arts, culture and heritage. Some – for example, Gigha and Eigg - have run music festivals, with a dual purpose of enhancing local social and cultural life while also raising money for the CLI and generating tourist income for the local economy. Others have highlighted physical memorials to particular episodes in their community's past: for example, that at the abandoned whaling station in North Harris (MacKenzie 2012: 197-199), or the Lewis land raiders' memorial at Bhaltos (Bhaltos Community Trust) – this latter explicitly linking historical land struggles to present day community ownership.

Both these latter cases are clearly directly addressing the third face of power, making particular histories of the people of the locality visible through physical changes to the landscape. Yet less explicitly political environmental works aimed at improving recreational opportunities, or cultural projects aimed at facilitating self-expression, may also enhance individual community members' powers in various ways, both meeting
needs for recreation, but also sometimes generating political controversy. Hunting in particular has been the focus for some of this, and in several cases, what might be considered merely recreational powers – to shoot deer or fish for salmon – have been treated as significant issues by people involved in community land initiatives. This is perhaps not so surprising in the light of historical and folkloric data on attitudes to nature that shows a strong belief that the resident population had a right to take wild animals for subsistence (Hunter 2000: 218), and suggests that attention to culture and the local meanings of certain practices helps uncover their significance for “power within” (McMorran and Scott 2013: 148, Stornoway Gazette 2007).

In addition to these direct activities, CLIs have created local decision-making spaces for the governance of land. These generally take the form of companies limited by guarantee, run by a board of directors, according to governance proceedings set out in the companies' Articles of Association. Directors are elected by the members; any member can stand to become a director; eligible persons have to apply for membership (generally for a nominal fee). With the notable exception of ACT (and some other early, crofter-only CLIs), membership is open to all local residents. Often eligibility is linked to the electoral roll, although in some cases eligibility is wider than this, including 16- and 17- year olds also (MacKenzie 2012: 66). In some cases (e.g. ACT and North Harris), directors are elected on a geographical basis, with seats on the board reserved for particular settlements: McMorran and Scott suggest this offers “potential for managing conflict across large rural areas” (2013: 167). While comprehensive data do not exist, it would seem that elections are rarely contested. However, in some cases the author is aware of (e.g. Abriachan Forest Trust, or Stòras Uibhist) there have been candidates standing as a challenge to the existing board.

d. Invited spaces: participation in governance institutions at national and regional levels

This section first briefly outlines the development of policy on community land ownership over the last two decades. It then considers CLI engagement in a number of key spaces formally concerned with the politics of land ownership, provided by the Land Reform Act, National Forest Land Scheme, and HIE's Community Land Unit; and one other public asset holder relevant to the case study: Scottish Water.
The development of policy

In the 1990s, early initiatives in Assynt, Eigg and elsewhere had benefited from behind-the-scenes advice and assistance from the Highland Council (interviews with community land movement activists), and some local and national politicians had voiced support for CLIs (Hunter 2012). However, there had been little formal policy support. As more cases of community land ownership emerged, public policy began to shift. Land ownership came onto the agenda in political spaces beyond the local level, and new spaces and institutions formally dedicated to supporting collective and community land ownership were created by a range of public bodies.

In the middle of the decade, at regional level, HIE and the Crofters Commission jointly set up a Crofting Trusts Advisory Service (CTAS) in 1995, which provided advice and research funding for crofting townships interested in acquiring their land. This worked with at least 22 township groups; however, it did not lead to any immediate community land bids (Campbell 2001). Shifts were taking place at higher levels of government also, although they largely addressed community ownership as a regionally-specific phenomenon. Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, was publicly supportive of community ownership, and led legislation designed to facilitate the transfer of publicly-owned land to local bodies, the Transfer of Crofting Estates (Scotland) Act 1997. As with the earlier DAFS consultation exercise, however, there was no great rush from crofter organisations to take on publicly-owned crofting estates. There was scepticism about the balance of costs and benefits in such a transfer, and, despite statements of intent from Michael Forsyth, doubts about the likelihood and legal feasibility of the government releasing the land free of charge (Campbell 2001).

In parallel with these developments, there were conscious efforts by various activists to engage with the third face of power, by problematising the existing pattern of landownership in Scotland and stimulating public discussion of the potential for change. Prominent initiatives included the publication of a number of books – Who Owns Scotland, How Scotland is Owned, Who Owns Scotland Now (Wightman 1996, Callander 1998, Cramb 1996) - dealing with, respectively, the details of the pattern of landownership in contemporary Scotland, the legal structures involved, and profiles of individual private landowners. There was also the creation of a series of public lectures on landownership, begun in 1993 following the Assynt buyout and the death the
previous year of John McEwen, a land campaigner and author of the original Who Owns Scotland in the early 1970s. By the end of the decade, the lectures were attracting an audience of senior policymakers. Indeed the 1998 lecture “Land reform for the 21st century” set out a policy programme for land reform, and was delivered by Donald Dewar, First Minister of the newly-created devolved Scottish Executive.

As this indicates, and earlier noted, the late 1990s saw changes at UK, Scotland and regional (Highlands and Islands) levels that had significant effects on power relations around land and community ownership. Following the change in UK government from Conservative to Labour, a process of devolution was begun which was to lead to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and Executive, empowered to legislate and govern on land ownership. In the interim, the Scottish Office was headed by a Secretary (Donald Dewar) and Minister (Brian Wilson) who were advocates of community ownership – and, perhaps in contrast to their Conservative predecessor, as keen as promoting it on privately-owned land as on state-owned land. The Scottish Office took a number of significant initiatives. These included: the creation of a Community Land Unit in HIE, dedicated to providing technical support to CLIs; the allocation of some of the National Lottery's proceeds to supporting community land ownership, in the shape of the Scottish Land Fund; and the beginnings of the legislative process of land reform in the establishment of the Land Reform Policy Group (LRPG), which was taken to fruition by the Scottish Executive and Parliament with the passing of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003. These initiatives will be covered in more detail later in this chapter.

There has been a renewed wave of interest in and support for community land ownership at Scotland level in recent years. In 2011, the Scottish Government announced that there would be a second Scottish Land Fund, with £6m over three years, in operation from 2012-13 to 2014-15 (Scottish Government 2012b). They also announced that there would be a review of land reform legislation, to report within the duration of the current Scottish Parliament; and that they would consult on and prepare a “Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill”, which would have some overlap with the community assets agenda. The Land Reform Review Group was constituted in 2012, and reconstituted in mid-2013 following a short interim report that was widely criticised as unambitious by leading figures in the land reform movement (e.g.
Wightman 2013, Wilson 2013). The final report in 2014, in contrast, was much more substantial, and well received by that movement (Land Reform Review Group 2014).

The Highland Council tended to be supportive of CLIs from the early 1990s, and it is said that considerable “behind the scenes” practical support was offered to Assynt and Eigg CLIs (author's interview data), as well as some limited financial support. The Council was more publicly involved with the Knoydart Foundation's campaign, and the Council retains a seat on the board (Campbell 2008: 9-10). More recently HC organised a conference in 2010 seeking to promote a renewed wave of community land ownership, and the then head of the Council has publicly advocated more community ownership and regularly attends CLS events.

**Highlands and Islands Enterprise Community Land Unit**

While HIE had been involved in community assets activity in the 1980s, through the promotion of community co-operatives (Co Chomunn), it was not proactively involved in the Assynt Crofters' Trust campaign. Later in the decade, HIE contributed 1% of the purchase price of the Isle of Eigg, under a policy that the agency would contribute the “last brick in the wall” to complete a project (Watt 2012).

This policy was to shift substantially. The creation of the Community Land Unit was announced by newly appointed Scottish Office Minister Brian Wilson, and the HIE Chief Executive, at the “Independence Day” celebrations on Eigg in 1997 that marked the community partnership's purchase of the island (Campbell 2001, Hunter 2012: 100). The Unit had a remit to support community landowning groups through the entire process: from considering whether or not to attempt to become landowners, through the purchase process, and into the post-purchase development phase, known in the Unit as “aftercare”.

While the Unit started with three staff and £1m per annum to spend on supporting community land purchases – a significant increase from the public support available to CLIs pre-1997 - a key development was its successful bid to administer the Scottish Land Fund (see below) in 2001. Staffing was increased to 11, and the funding budget expanded substantially also (SQW 2005: 2). By 2005 the Unit had supported 260 projects and disbursed £12.4m, two thirds of which was Scottish Land Fund money.
The Unit followed on with the administration of both the SLF’s immediate successor, Growing Community Assets, and more recently, the reinstated Scottish Land Fund 2. HIE thus emerges as clearly the most ubiquitous funder of community asset acquisition in the recent DTAS survey of all Scotland (Black and Leeman 2012: 19). Staff suggest, however, that the importance of their other two functions – providing CLIs with strategic advice, and facilitating their access to technical expertise – should not be underestimated. This perspective is reflected by several community land activists, who note the importance both of technical expertise, and external support for morale (interviews with CLU staff and community land activists).

The Unit can itself be analysed as a key space where community activists and civil servants with access to funding and other resources interact. This places its members of staff in an ambiguous position: are they an extension of the community land movement within HIE, or HIE's representatives to the movement? To translate this into the powercube framework, the question is, who owns the space? Is it an invited space, where participation is on the terms set by HIE? Or a claimed space, where the community land movement has succeeded in setting the rules of engagement?

Some, including those involved in the Unit, feel that with the creation of the Unit the public sector was following the community land movement rather than the other way around (Watt 2012). Further, the Unit's role in promoting community land ownership, and inception relatively early in the growth of the community land movement, meant that its members were learning and developing policy and practice alongside many community activists, leading to close partnership working. Indeed, several members have left to either pursue careers in community development consultancy, or become community land activists themselves. Others in HIE may have felt that this relationship became too close at times:

sometimes there are a good “macro-economic reasons” why they [local shops or businesses] close – can't do anything about it. “But the community land unit say ‘we must have a buyout!' No.”
(extract from fieldnotes, conversation with former HIE staff member – non CLU)
A perception has grown in the wider community land movement that the character of
the Unit has changed – that the movement has lost ownership of the space to some
degree, and the HIE bureaucracy now has greater control over the “terms of invitation”
to participate (Macleod et al 2010: 112-3). One activist in Sleat questioned how much
community land ownership mattered to the Unit's staff, and suggested that they are now
“in HIE mode”, i.e. more concerned with observing formal procedures than outcomes
on the ground. While some link this to changes in personnel inside the Unit, some
within HIE also point to changes at other levels of decision-making. These include
pressures on public expenditure which create an increasingly risk-averse public sector
culture; and policy shifts driven by the SNP Scottish Government's focus on economic
growth – which is linked, for example, to the rebranding of the Unit as the “Community
Assets Team”.

Nevertheless, in Sleat, both CLIs work with the CLU. Advocacy from the Unit was
acknowledged as an important factor in the CDI's decision to draw up a Township
Development Plan – incidentally employing a former HIE staff member as consultant to
do so. There is also one current CLU employee resident in Sleat, in Duisdale; and
several former HIE employees now self-employed in the peninsula, one working as
business manager with SCT, and another acting as a consultant to community groups
and an 'activist' (in my terms) with the SCT for a while. The spatially dispersed
structure of HIE has thus directly contributed to the local pool of people with
community project management and funding skills, in an indirect sense empowering the
community in this field.

More generally, there is a feeling within the wider community land movement that
HIE's social development work over the longer term has been an important factor in the
emergence of the movement:

Personally again I think it's regrettable that Scottish Enterprise do not have a
social and economic function, because certainly talking with people in Dumfries
and Galloway (...) they can't do community development the same way we can
in the Highlands and Islands, and that's why it's happened in the Highlands and
Islands, I'm positive.

('Graham', CLI movement activist)
The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

The Land Reform Act emerged from the Land Reform Policy Group (LRPG), set up by the Scottish Office, a UK government body, in 1998. It undertook a series of consultations around the possible content of legislation on land reform, which further stimulated debate. The Scottish Executive produced a Bill drawing on the LRPG's proposals, and in 2003 the Land Reform (Scotland) Act was passed, entering into force in 2005.

The LRPG was evidently an invited space for participation in the land reform process, and many actors took up the invitation: the Group received over 1000 submissions overall (Scottish Government undated). The content of the final proposals remained firmly with the members of the LRPG, however. Further, the extent to which those proposals were translated first into a Bill, and then into the eventual Act, was determined in other spaces in the Scottish Government and Parliament, closed to direct participation by most interest parties.

The Act itself can be seen as a space for making decisions about powers over land, where community activists, landowners, Scottish Government officials and Ministers come together on terms set by the legislation. These terms impose duties on all participants, and community bodies that fail to meet them can see their applications fail – they can be excluded from the space. While CLI participants have praised Government officials and felt that they built collaborative relationships with them (Macleod et al 2010: 82-3), some community activists feel that the legislation is implemented more strictly in relation to their duties than to Ministers' duties, for example in relation to complying with deadlines (Macleod et al 2010: 79). Rather than any personal qualities of officials or Ministers, this may simply reflect the inequality of the power relationship between Ministers and other parties in the Act. It is Ministers who hold ultimate decision-making power over whether a given registration or activation will proceed or not (Wightman 2007); it is Ministers who decide whether or not to exclude community bodies from the space for failing to fulfil the conditions of the Act, not the other way around. Further reinforcing this inequality, despite the broad political interest of Ministers in seeing the Act to appear to be a success, each decision arguably has greater significance for the “strategic life choices” of both CLIs and landowners than it does for Ministers and their officials.
The Act has three parts. The first concerns public recreational access to land, and this study is not concerned with that. The Community Right to Buy is Part Two of the Act; Part Three is the Crofting Community Right to Buy. In many respects the two Rights to Buy are similar. There is a strict timetable to be followed for implementation of the various stages of the process. Both require purchase rather than simple transfer of land; neither come with any funding attached, and the purchase price for the land is set by the District Valuer. In both cases, a formal organisation – a “community body” - must apply to Scottish Ministers to use the Act. The constitution of the community body is specified and it must demonstrate local support through the holding of a referendum on the proposed purchase.

However, there are differences relating to the definition of community and community support. In Part Two, the Community Right to Buy, membership must be open to all residents of a community area defined by postcodes; and the referendum must see a majority of the whole electorate vote in favour (i.e. not just a majority of the turnout). For Part Three, the definition of the eligible members is more complex, combining a place-based definition of community with the intricacies of crofting legislation on where croft tenants may live (Busby and Macleod 2010: 599). Official guidance includes a flowchart to guide community bodies in “identifying the crofting community” (Macleod et al 2010: 101). Further, the ballot must show not just a majority of members in favour of the proposed purchase, but also a majority of registered crofters in favour. This may reflect concerns expressed by some crofters' representatives in the consultations around the Act about the possibility that non-crofting community members could use the Act to gain decision-making power over croft land (Macleod et al 2010: 104).

The major difference between the two parts, however, stems from the different powers they afford the community bodies using them. The Community Right to Buy gives communities a right of first refusal if land comes up for sale. What community bodies must do is first register a community interest in land – a process which involves constituting an organisation appropriately, making a case to Scottish Ministers and demonstrating a degree of local support. If approved, the registration lasts for five years. Only if the land comes up for sale does the process of applying to use the Act – to
activate a registration” - begin. It is a market-based, “willing seller” land reform measure, with some similarities to other recent programmes around the world (Borras 2003, Cotula et al 2006, Deininger 1999, Lahiff 2007). It enhances communities' power to deal in the land market, but does not directly change what land comes into the market when.

In contrast, the Crofting Community Right to Buy offers a more substantial shift in property rights, in that it provides communities with an absolute right to buy croft land, regardless of whether the landowner wants to sell or not. There is thus no need for a separate registration process: communities simply apply directly to activate the powers the Act provides. An element of restitution, and the cultural power of histories of crofting which stress the injustice of the Clearances, can perhaps be seen here in the linking of stronger powers to the notion of a specifically “crofting” community. Yet this power is perhaps balanced by more onerous conditions of implementation than for the weaker Community Right to Buy, both in relation to demonstrating community support, and also the requirements for extremely detailed and expensive mapping of the land to be purchased (Macleod et al 2010: 110-111).

The take up of the Act has been the subject of some controversy. On the one hand, some community organisations have successfully used it. Further, despite the association of land issues with the Highlands and Islands estates, applications to register a wide range of assets have been received from across Scotland (Macleod et al 2010: 70-1). Yet, notwithstanding this, and official guidance that the Act is not easy to use and should only be seen as a tool of last resort (Scottish Government 2004: 23), expectations were raised by the process that produced the Act that have not been fulfilled by its actuality (Macleod et al: 74-5). Thus by 2011, 131 applications to register a community interest in land under Part Two had led to 82 registrations, 22 attempts at activating a registration, and just nine successful purchases. Most of the unsuccessful activations failed because of lack of funds to complete the purchase (Macleod et al 2010: 70). By 2012 this had increased to 12 assets purchased, but out of an estimated total of 169 asset transfers to communities since the Act came into force (Black and Leeman 2012: 20). No land has been transferred under the Crofting Community Right to Buy, and only two applications have ever been completed (Macleod et al 2010: 103), while the Western
Isles, the most active crofting area, is now 40% under community ownership (Black and Leeman 2012: 12).

Several explanations are offered for this. Some commentators emphasise the demands on community capacity made by the onerous procedural requirements and timescales of the Act (Wightman 2007; Black and Leeman 2012). Many CLIs report that they found the process of using the Act extremely demanding; yet not all do so, with some feeling it was not particularly difficult (Macleod et al 2010: 78). The difference may lie in different combinations of skills and experience within CLIs. Some are able to call on the skills of “company directors and accountants” living locally, while others complain that “this area is not awash with specialist skills” (CLI activists quoted in Macleod et al 2010: 78). Those groups without skills available for free, or the finance to buy them in, must take on the burden of dealing with unfamiliar legal and financial matters themselves. They do so in the knowledge that landowners are very likely to be employing professionals, some of whom specialise in land reform negotiations. Thus one law firm produced a briefing for clients entitled “Derailing a registered community interest”, which encourages landowners not to “throw in the towel” when a CLI applies to use the Act (Semple Fraser 2009), as:

> what might seem like a mere technicality can end up derailing the entire registration of a Community Interest.

Then there are the limitations of the powers obtainable through Part Two. Certainly, many registrations have remained dormant simply because land has not come on the market. In some cases, landowners have withdrawn land from market – or rushed to sell it - when they learn an application to use the Act is in process, thus avoiding being bound by the Act (Macleod et al 2010: 71, 82; Black and Leeman 2012: 19).

The lack of funding associated with the Act is also identified by many as a key barrier to its use (Scottish Government 2012a: 26-7), with one activist (quoted in Macleod et al 2010: 85) commenting that:

> the Act is nonsense unless the money is there.

There are further considerations that are important to community bodies' decision-making with regard to a potential use of the Act. Not only does participating in the “Act
space” place demands on CLI powers, with uncertainty as to the outcomes (if the land doesn't come on the market); it also impacts on social relations in the local community spaces in which CLI activists, and their organisation, must also participate. Local community politics, and relationships with landowners, are cited by many CLIs as a factor in the decision not to use the Act (Macleod et al 2010: 86). This is partly because of the power of landowners at local level. Thus one activist (quoted in Macleod et al 2010: 86) said that

if a landowner near the community is unfriendly and uncooperative, using the Act against them can lead to a lifetime of obstruction and pettiness which is unproductive.

A Scottish Government official involved in the administration of the Act observes (Holmes 2010: 13) that:

We know that landowners often dislike the right to buy and will not sell the land or assets to a community body while their interest is registered.

Such considerations also apply, perhaps even more strongly, where CLI-landowner relations are relatively collaborative: to register an interest under the Act could precipitate conflict. Again, a previously quoted activist (in Macleod et al 2010: 86) felt that the key factor was:

how remote the landowner feels to the community.

Using the Act was described by another activist as “a forceful intervention” (Macleod et al 2010: 85), with the potential to destabilise existing relationships. This might also include with community members other than landowners. Where a landowner is locally based, upsetting the landowner may be perceived as being divisive. This clashes with many people's understanding of “community” as being related to cooperation and consensus, and may therefore be difficult for a self-proclaimed “community” organisation.

Thus the Abriachan Forest Trust raised the possibility of altering their constitution to be eligible to use the Act some years ago. This caused “suspicion” among some members of the community (interview with AFT activist) and led to a (failed) electoral challenge to the Board of Directors. Others reported that their group had decided, when contemplating land purchases, not to use the Act because it would be seen as
having your eye on someone else's property
(CLI activist interviewed for Macleod et al 2010: extract from interview notes by the author)

In the light of this discussion, it is notable that the majority of successful purchases have involved absentee owners, often public bodies (Macleod et al 2010: 87).

It is clear that the visible “first face” powers bestowed on CLIs by the Act are limited by a number of issues related to the other faces of power. Yet there may also be aspects of these more hidden faces of power where the Act works in favour of CLIs. Thus, at least two large-scale CLIs – Stòras Uibhist and the Galson Estate Trust – began the process of using the Crofting Community Right to Buy provisions of the Act. At the same time, they were in negotiations with the owners of their respective estates; and in both cases, the land was purchased by the community bodies outwith the framework of the Act. Nevertheless, again in both cases, activists felt that the prospect of becoming embroiled in the legal complexity of the Act made the landowners more willing to negotiate a sale than they might otherwise have been. Some also felt that the ballot process was a particularly important factor, with landowners' position shifting when they realised that a majority of residents of their land were in favour of proceeding with a buyout attempt (Macleod et al 2010: 105-7, 119-120; Hunter 2012: 161; conversations with activists at CLS conferences). In this sense, the Act did empower these CLIs.

With regard to the third face or wider cultural impact of the Act, many feel that it has altered the balance of power between communities and landowners (see views reported in e.g. Warren and McKee 2011, Glass et al 2013, Macleod et al 2010: 72-75, 116). As previously noted, some felt that this power was actually greatest before the Bill (that became the Act) was fully drafted (Macleod et al 2010: 74-75, 117). The uncertainty over how radical the Act might prove to be caused greater concern to landowners than its actual provisions, when they were finally agreed; and the wider political process that led to the Act raised interest in questions of land and power.

The interrelationship between the different faces of power in practice is illustrated by the case of the Pairc Estate in Lewis. There, the landowner and CLI have not reached a negotiated agreement to sell the land. The CLI, Pairc Trust, have proceeded with an
application to use the Crofting Community Right to Buy; the landowner has vigorously contested this, including in legal proceedings (Macleod et al 2010: 107-9, Hunter 2012: 184-6). Further, the Crofting Community Right to Buy has been widely criticised for its administrative complexity, in particular the stipulations for mapping of land to be purchased – in much greater detail than for any ordinary private sale. It is suggested that this complexity makes this part of the Act either impossible, or at least very expensive, to implement (Macleod et al 2010: 110-111). The difficulties that the Paice Trust has encountered suggest that the Act's less visible power effects - helping to bring reluctant actors to the bargaining table - are in part dependent on perceptions of the effectiveness of the visible power mechanisms that the Act provides.

Sleat Community Trust have discussed the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in relation to a number of issues. These have included being ready to purchase parts of the land of Sleat should, for example, the Clan Donald Lands Trust put them up for sale; or other small parcels of land. The Trust has not seriously discussed a large-scale buyout using the Act, and therefore not yet participated in any of the relevant spaces.

The Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative used the Act to purchase the Allt Duisdale reservoir (see Chapter Seven). Here the use of the Act appears to have been linked to Scottish Water's desire to go through an officially-sanctioned process for selling to a community that included an independent valuation. As will be discussed more later, the use of the Act also prompted the move from Camuscross Community Initiative to Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative, as officials from the Scottish Government Community Assets Team declared that Camuscross and Duisdale were one community for the purposes of the Act. A group representing only half a community would not be eligible to use the Act. Including Duisdale may well have been something CCI activists wanted to do, but it is clear that the pace of change was forced. It is therefore also clear that the Scottish Government prevailed in this power relationship with CCI.

**The Forestry Commission for Scotland's National Forest Land Scheme**

Within the Forestry Commission, it is the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) that provides the key invited space for engagement with the FCS about land ownership. The NFLS became operational in 2005 and emerged from a decade or more of increasing openness to community participation in forest management within the FCS. This
openness is seen as a response both to community activist pressure from “below” and political pressure from “above”. One closely involved member of Forestry staff noted a geographical variation in community pressure in the years leading up to the launch of the Scheme:

There are some communities who (...) like to take, you know, the kids for a walk or go for a bike ride, and that's about the extent of their interest. But in other places (...) there was more interest in developing livelihoods. And, we would look at it now as, local business development. Economic development. And that, was a general pattern, in Forestry Commission Scotland, I think. The interest in developing livelihoods and local businesses tended to be in the north and the west rather than the south and the east.

(FCS staff member)

The NFLS is clearly an “invited space”, with rules set by the FCS determining what kind of community body can apply, timescales and procedures. Nevertheless, it appears fairly stable at present. The FCS is apparently relatively content with it; community bodies feel that the rules and procedures – the terms of the invitation, as it were – are more favourable to them than the Land Reform Act. Accordingly the NFLS has not been subject to anything like the same degree of criticism as the Act. It may be relevant that there is community movement representation on the body that oversees the NFLS at Scotland level, and the FCS emphasises partnership working with the Community Woodlands Association.

At local level, a key relationship is between the community body and the Forest District Manager (FDM). Sleat Community Trust's difficulties over the sudden “for sale” notice for the Forest appearing in the newspaper, and an argument with the FCS over road upgrading prior to sale (see Chapter Seven), may have been partly due to a series of reorganisations within the FCS that led to the Trust dealing with three different FDMs over the course of their application to the Scheme. This relationship can be seen as an informally constituted space for liaison over forestry policy between SCT and the Commission: lack of continuity in FCS membership of this space highlights the power of an FDM and the importance of this role locally.

**Other public assets holders: Scottish Water**

Scottish Water holds a large number of assets across Scotland, in the shape of reservoirs, water treatment plants, pipes and other infrastructure. The organisation also
regularly disposes of a significant number of assets, as it reorganises and upgrades services and finds particular assets have become “redundant”. However, Sleat is unusual in having a community purchase of a Scottish Water asset – there are perhaps only two or three other cases of community interest in a reservoir or other tangible asset (Scottish Water estates staff member).

Given the infrequency of community interest in its assets, there is no institutionalised “space” created for community liaison around assets takeover, unlike the Forestry Commission. In the case of the Allt Duisdale reservoir, Scottish Water took a decision to halt the auction process in order to give the community group time to mount a bid for the asset. The Land Reform Act process included a valuation process, which was attractive to Scottish Water in that it demonstrated value for money in the disposal of a public asset. However, this has not set policy more widely. It is an indication of the sensitivity of the issue of community asset ownership in relation to public sector assets that Scottish Water was unable to comment further, citing ongoing policy discussions as the reason.

e. Economic power: generating funding

Financing community land or asset acquisition is a challenge that confronts CLIs. Landed assets vary in size and market value, but Highland estates are often relatively large areas of land of poor agricultural condition, remote from large centres of population. As noted earlier in this chapter, the market demand for them is often from wealthy individuals for the purposes of leisure and status – for consumption, rather than production. This is also frequently the purpose for which they have been managed. These factors combine to make the price relatively high in relation to both the capacity of local residents to pay, and in relation to the perceived capacity of the asset to pay for itself, at least in the short term.

This is not always the case. Firstly, the growth in the renewable energy market is raising the economic potential of windswept areas of moorland – although it may also raise the market price. Secondly, not all assets purchased are very large. In fact, both the assets purchased by groups on Sleat – the forest and the reservoir – were relatively unchallenging. The reservoir was small and valued at less than £10,000; thus the scale of the funding task was not so large as for many other assets. The forest was valued at £330,000 but, as it contained a substantial amount of marketable timber at a time of
high timber prices, Sleat Community Trust were happy to fund the majority of the purchase through loans which they were confident they would be able to pay off.

Nevertheless, it remains the case that for most community groups, there is little chance of them raising sufficient funds from their own members to purchase land. Therefore CLIs must seek economic power from elsewhere if they wish to control assets.

**Funding: spaces and resources**

Firstly, they may seek funding through market transactions – loans. As well as high-street banks, there are a number of banks that specialise in social enterprise and suggest – although some activists sometimes contest this (Gubbins 2011) – that they offer relatively favourable terms and conditions to community groups. Then there are quasi-public organisations like Social Investment Scotland. While there is not space to go into the details of the various finance deals available from these bodies, the common point is that the money has to be repaid, and with interest. Taking out such a loan commits the CLI to generating future income to repay it, and requires a certain level of confidence in the income-producing potential of the asset being bought and the capacity of the group to manage it.

Secondly, there is the possibility of grants – money that does not have to be repaid. There is a multitude of public sector and quasi-public bodies, and private charitable organisations, that make grants. In general, engagement with these bodies is through applications in writing and judged on their terms, with funding decisions made in “closed” spaces. Diversity and complexity of the sector, and norms of bureaucratic accountability, combine to raise real procedural difficulties for groups engaging with it – obstacles of “hidden power”. The terms of engagement – format of application, types of projects funded, decision-making criteria and timescales – vary widely from one body to another. The sector was described as a “minefield” by respondents to a survey of land reform groups, who also bemoaned “obscure application forms and replies [that] often took ages” (unpublished responses to surveys undertaken for Macleod et al 2010).

A particular issue concerns the mismatch between funding bodies' timescales for responding to applications, and the short deadlines demanded by the Land Reform Act. A Big Lottery staff member commented to a Community Land Scotland workshop that applications could be turned around “in 10 days” if needed, suggesting the problem was
acknowledged by some funders (author's field notes, CLS Conference 2012). More generally, the demands of meeting external deadlines to submit complex application forms recall the literature on “community time” and “official time” (MacMillan 2004, Gilchrist 2012).

In such a context, having individuals within a community group with the skills to navigate this world themselves is a significant boost to that group's capacity, its “power to gain economic power”. The contribution of such people in skills and effort is recognised by others. For example, the secretary of the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative was frequently referred to by others as being very good at finding funding, someone who:

just knows how to, get the hook on to all these funding groups and draw them in ('Rachel', CDI area resident)

Even so, CDI appointed an external consultant to work specifically on funding and development of their Sustainable Community Hub project. This consultant's time was itself funded from money awarded by the Lottery to CDI for the development of a full project funding application, after the group's success with its initial project funding application. Such 'pre-project' funding for community project development is quite common among public funding agencies, including those working with CLIs. While it reflects a belief in the importance of thorough and rigorous project planning, it is also an explicit recognition of the standards of project planning that an application form needs to demonstrate to successfully be awarded funding; and in turn, the demands that this places on volunteer capacity in community groups. In another context, it was suggested that another Sleat resident be put forward for a Highland Council community service award for putting together a funding application that made a particular project possible – the form being described as “an extraordinary piece of work”.

The putting together of funding applications involves multiple aspects of power. There is the “hidden power” encapsulated in knowledge of the funding sector – what funders are there, what might they fund? There is also an element of the conscious use of the third face of power in the pitching of bids for funding. One person spoke of “telling a good story” (CDI activist), and another of the importance of “positive” writing.
Still another noted the effect that prolonged immersion in this process could have on the local activists themselves:

you go looking for funding to make it happen. And in the process of that, you have to start persuading the funders that it's economically viable. So you sit down and write up all sorts of budgets. And you convince yourself that it's economically viable. And then you find that in reality a few years down the line, it's only just economically viable.

('Murray', SCT activist)

This activist, then, suggests that demands of the funding sector – or, at least, the perception of their demands and of the need to present projects in a certain light – starts to lead to local activists seeing their own projects in that light too; for example, that a project originally intended to deliver a service will also generate net income. To adopt Goffman's dramaturgical approach, the “frontstage” presentation of a project to funders may come to influence the perception of it by activists “backstage”. This may be particularly the case for activists who were not involved in the original backstage debates and application process. Such dynamics can help stoke ongoing debates about projects' purpose, funding, importance, and future direction.

There was also a moral dimension to some discussions of funding in Sleat. The accessing of sums of money far beyond what might be raised in the community, or earned by any community member, through the appeal to obscure and distant funding bodies, did not sit well with all Sleat residents. Some seemed to view it as having an air of illegitimacy, as suggested in this quotation about the Sleat Community Trust purchase of the filling station:

Donnie's laughing: he couldn't sell the business, you see? So that didn't sit well with people. That money came out of nowhere, and he got it all.

('Donald', Sleat resident: emphasis added)

Conversely, others placed greater emphasis on the legitimacy of accessing funding – whether for community projects or other purposes, notably supporting crofting. Still, such points were often accompanied by an acknowledgement that not all felt like this:

people don't like the word subsidy but I'm not ashamed (...) no-one should kid themselves – street lights, pavements, whatever you want – there's money going out to everyone. And everyone should have a good standard of living, I'm for that...

('Fiona', Sleat crofter)
I've no problem with people taking money – if the money is there for the job to be done, then why not take it?
('Iain', Sleat crofter)

Another long-term local resident associated the world of funding with “incomers”, albeit relatively positively, noting that:

incomers are great at raising funds
('Catriona', Sleat resident)

In contrast, some emphasised locals' skill in manipulating funding agencies. Funders were cast as well-meaning but naïve outsiders, who underestimated the business and political acumen of locals. Here the story of how a crofter received assistance for starting a business he had already begun is being relayed:

the development agency heard of it and came along saying they wanted him to go into [business], so he played dumb and got all the grants.
('Jim', former Sleat resident)

While the tone is ironic rather than celebratory, and the factual accuracy unverified, the tenor of this story is much less bitter than the reference to “money out of nowhere” quoted earlier.

There were differences of opinion on the specific question of funding community land initiatives also. One person who was sceptical of CLIs said that:

the problem with “community buy-outs” is that they “couldn't survive without public money”, except “maybe Gigha, and Assynt”.
(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Niall', Sleat resident)

Assynt in this context meant the Assynt Crofters Trust. The reference to Gigha is perhaps in relation to income from the island's wind turbines. This might have been interesting in the light of the question of whether FITS payments are seen as “public money” or not; unfortunately the opportunity to pursue this question was missed.

Another was much happier about the use of public money for community land, and had quite different reservations about the process:

As far as I'm aware it's mostly public money, state money, government money, that helps buyouts to a large extent. I see nothing wrong with that. Only thing wrong I see is that sometimes the money, public money is going to a landowner,
who in my view has little right to the land in the first place. Particularly clan
chieftains who never had title deeds (...) But if it's going to remove the (...) dead
hand of the landowner, that is fine.
('Sean', Sleat resident)

Given the demands of accessing funding described above, the Scottish Land Fund
therefore represented a particularly important achievement for the community land
movement. This was a grant-giving body created specifically to fund community land
acquisition, and only that, administered by HIE's Community Land Unit, who had good
knowledge of the movement's members. It disbursed £14m over its five year existence
(SQW 2007: 1), and financed many of the largest community land purchases, including
of the Isle of Gigha, the South Uist Estate and the North Harris Estate. The Fund, and
HIE, appear to be the funders most commonly involved in community asset acquisition
(Black and Leeman 2012: 19).

When the Land Fund closed it was replaced by Growing Community Assets. This was
open to many more sorts of projects across rural and urban Scotland, and administered
by the Big Lottery. When it too closed, funding to grow community land ownership was
felt to be in crisis by many. Activists in the wider movement argued for renewed
dedicated funding, and following surveys of community land initiatives (Bryan and
Campbell 2010, Community Land Scotland 2011a), the new movement body
Community Land Scotland made the establishment of a new Scottish Land Fund one of
its key aims when it was founded in 2010 (Community Land Scotland 2011b).

Some involved in community land initiatives in Sleat were aware of the Fund and
shared this appreciation of its role. One had in fact sat on the Board of the original
Fund. Another, when discussing the possibility of large-scale community land
ownership in the peninsula, commented:

if that [FEI] had gone on the market, and the Trust was looking at acquisition of
that, then it would have been practically impossible. A few years ago it would
have been possible. You know, you could have raised that sort of money. But not
now (...) without the Scottish Land Fund, I can't see that there's going to be a
pot of money there to do that.
('James', SCT activist)

The establishment of a second Scottish Land Fund was therefore a significant event for
the community land movement. Launched in 2012 (and extended in 2013 and 2014),
funded from the Big Lottery, with administration by HIE, the fund holds £9m, to be
disbursed over eight years. Its operation was the subject of debate at the Community Land Scotland conference in 2012, with several speakers urging that the Fund be used to enable substantial land purchases which could be “transformative” projects.

To date, the SLF2 has awarded a total of just under £2m shared between 11 projects (Big Lottery Scotland: 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). While two of these are large-scale land purchases (both in the Western Isles), and two are medium-size forests, the majority are more of a smaller-scale “community asset” nature. The Fund has an upper limit of £750,000 for grants. This is a substantial sum of money, but small in relation to the price of Scottish rural estates. While it might be possible to put together larger projects through combining multiple funding sources, it is clear that the second Fund does not offer the same financial empowerment to CLIs that the first Fund did, which several times awarded over £1m to facilitate whole estate purchases.

This has consequences for the kinds of power relationships which arise in the new local asset management spaces created through the Fund's actions. For example, the Colintrave and Glendaruel Trust was recently awarded just over £300,000 towards the purchase of the 600 ha Stronafian Forest (Big Lottery Scotland 2013). The full price, however, was £1.5m, and £1.3m of this was contributed by a private company in exchange “for the rights to the commercial forestry over 99 years” (Colintrave and Glendaruel Trust 2013). While the Trust is pressing ahead with plans for community engagement with that part of the forest which it does control, community ownership in this case has meant something less than the power that full ownership property rights might suggest.

**Conflict and collaboration in funding power relations**

The dependence of CLIs on funding from external bodies clearly affords those external bodies a degree of power over the CLIs. This power can be exercised so as to further empower CLIs, however. This can clearly be seen in the history of community land ownership, where, notwithstanding the recent development just discussed, the phenomenon of community organisations owning land in partnership with external bodies – who were co-funders of land purchases – appears to have all but disappeared. Access to Lottery and other funding, and policy conditions about local control in funding awards, legislation (e.g. the Land Reform Act) or asset transfer programmes (e.g. National Forest Land Scheme), have given power to community bodies to exclude
non-local bodies from CLI decision-making spaces. This is remarkable given that a reverse conditionality – requiring new community landowners to partner with more experienced and “professional” external bodies – might easily have been imagined. That the policy shift was instead towards requiring a majority of locally-elected directors of community landowning bodies perhaps indicates the extent to which visions of community capacity to exercise local democratic control had taken root in the relevant sections of the Lottery and HIE, and the Scottish political elite more widely.

Nevertheless, such conditionality is still a demonstration of funders' power. This power can be exercised through the direct discretionary decision-making of civil servants or ministers, to approve or decline the award of funds from a public scheme; and through the setting of rules of procedure, criteria for eligibility and types of activity that will be funded. Such regulation of funding may take place in the funding body itself or originate in another institution or at another level. Thus, for example, accessing funding from public sector bodies within the UK for community groups in trading activities may be complicated by considerations of European Union “State Aids” regulations relating to levels of public sector subsidy of businesses. Such considerations were carefully discussed in relation to the CDI's proposed hydro-electric generation scheme, which might become ineligible for FITS payments (see below) if public funding was used to help develop the project.

Any one funder's power is lessened to the extent that CLIs are not dependent on it for the means to fulfil their goals. Therefore, one important factor is the number and nature of other sources of external funding available:

> communities shouldn't go chasing money, communities should decide what they want to do, and then find the appropriate money to do it.

('Michael', public sector support worker: emphasis added)

Again, key aspects of other funding sources will be their visibility (are CLIs aware of them?), ease of access (including application procedures), eligibility criteria and range of activities funded, and quantity of funding available. In this light, it is notable that the consultant hired by CDI to progress their Sustainable Community Hub project emphasised at a public meeting that there were “over 80” potential funders for the project – i.e., the project was not dependent on the say of just one or two organisations.
At the same meeting, the consultant elaborated on a more collaborative power relationship between funders and community groups, starting with a series of “mantras” for community bodies approaching funders:

Funders are our partners! They need us as much as we need them! (...) Be funding fed, not funding led! (...) They [funders] want problems solved, we are the people who can solve them. Build a relationship with your funders.

(consultant presentation to CDI Sustainable Community Hub community workshop, 5th May 2012).

These statements suggest a willingness to analyse the power relationships which funders – and the people working for them - find themselves in, and consider the possibility that funding bodies too are subject to the power of others. Public and private funding agencies alike are organisations whose power depends on having resources to distribute. These resources are often supplied from elsewhere, whether by government or an individual or company philanthropist – the people who fund the funders, so to speak. Other things being equal, one may assume that these people wish to see their resources put to good use, in line with their policies. So just as community groups may need funders to provide them with economic power, funding organisations need community groups and projects that fit with their criteria to ensure they can maintain their relationship with their funders.

To fulfil this role, community groups must be able to present themselves as appropriate recipients. CLI activists were quoted above of the importance of filling in forms well, of using “positive language” and “telling a good story”. Another Sleat resident argued for local activists, including the Community Trust, to be proactive in seeking funding and had a clear vision of the kind of “presentation of self” that might be required:

Let's be brutally selfish, if there's X amount of money out there, I want as much of that money to come into my community, and I'm not going to get that by not banging on people's doors, demanding that they listen to me and my big articulate plans, and you know the community's behind me, and, let's be ambitious (...) we've got to be visionary, strategically-driven, all the things that are going to appeal to, the bureaucrat the civil servant in the main in whose gift these things lie.

('Murdo', Sleat resident)

Indeed, funders may devote their own staff time to developing communities' capacity to present themselves appropriately, and to directing elsewhere projects that will not fit with that body's funding policies:
the staff person, between the agency and the community, is very important, to ensure, alignment. And if you don't have that (...) you can get incompatibility, which causes problems later on. (….but now) I'd like to think that there's a better understanding within funding agencies of the nature of communities and how communities work, and the kind of support that communities need to be able to put forward the kind of projects that funders want to fund. ('Michael', public sector worker)

In these mutual needs, for funding for projects and projects to fund, lies the basis for a collaborative aspect to the power relationship between CLIs and frontline funding agencies. This collaborative power is increased, and the conflictual nature of the power relationship diminished, by a degree of overlap between both groups' aims and objectives. Maintaining or increasing the population of rural areas of the Highlands and Islands, safeguarding rural service provision, rural economic development, promotion of the culture and environment of the area – all these are broad policy objectives that many CLIs and many public agencies could subscribe to. One might speak of an informal coalition around the sustainable development of the Highlands and Islands; and this notion will be explored further in the later Discussion chapter.

Again, this collaborative relationship is not without its conflictual aspects. This can arise around understandings of “community” and “community land”. Most prominently, perhaps, the Assynt Crofters Trust remains an organisation which only crofters can join: non-crofters resident in Assynt are excluded. This membership condition has made it ineligible for much public assistance aimed at community bodies, often available only to bodies whose membership was “open to the whole community” ('Michael', public sector worker). In Sleat, one crofter felt that there was enthusiasm among other Sleat crofters for a crofter-only buyout of the crofting lands held by the Clan Donald Lands Trust, but not among external funding bodies:

   We would have a crofting community buyout today if, if, we could fund it (...) the funding, for a community buy out, is fairly straightforward to find, to look at, to, you know for doing that, a research project into it. But the second you say no no no no, it's for the 75 shareholders who'll be buying out their crofting interest, on their croft, on their land, then it's, no, it's not. ('Iain', Sleat crofter)

The discussion so far has centred on the initial decision to award funds. A community body may be able to navigate the funding world and succeed in having its project design “fed” by funders, rather than “led” by them. Yet reporting procedures and
arrangements for oversight of what funds are actually used for, once awarded, are also important factors in the power relationship between funder and community body. When the core running costs of the community organisation are largely met through external funding, then, in addition to the power which funding bodies may directly exercise over a recipient, there are the issues of the amount of time which community organisations may have to allocate towards completing funding applications, reporting procedures and “building a relationship”; and the perpetual insecurity about the future survival or shape of the organisation beyond the grant period.

These sort of considerations increase the attractiveness to many community groups of generating their own income. The importance of this is emphasised by the Development Trusts Association for Scotland (Reid 2011):

the development of that independent income stream is crucial to the long-term viability of the organisation. Because what it does is it means that they, the organisation, in itself as an organisation, becomes less dependent on grant funding for its existence, and it enables the organisation to focus more clearly on delivery and outcomes, than it does have to do on spending time filling in grant application forms to enable it to survive (...) having a fairly independent organisation at the heart of that community means it can be more flexible to changing circumstances within that community.

Generating your own income gives you greater economic power. It is not without risks either: trading is subject to market fluctuations and competition. Yet it is empowering in that the income generating organisation can set its own priorities for spending, rather than these priorities being subject to approval by a funding body. This applies both to trading on the open market, and to quasi-market trading situations, such as the market for renewable energy, where the price for energy is regulated through the Feed-In Tariff Scheme (FITS). While government retains control of the price (see below), nevertheless, the power relationship is quite different to that with a grant-giving organisation. While FITS payments are still subject to government control, this only affects the size of the payment, and crucially is not related either to who generates the energy, or what they plan to do with the income. It comes without “strings”, and in this respect is closer to market-generated income than public or third sector funding. Thus the editor's introduction to a recent HIE guide to “managing community funds” (HIE 2013a: 2) notes that:
Many communities are beginning to generate significant income from renewable energy projects (…) Importantly, this money is in community control, without government or agency imposed limits or rules.

**Renewable energy**

In most cases, generating energy from renewables is primarily of interest to community land owners as a means of generating income from their land, rather than generating electricity for their own use. The development of renewable energy and the public support behind it have transformed the economic power of many CLIs. An indication of this is the publication by HIE of the document quoted from above: “Investing in your community: a guide to managing community funds” (HIE 2013a). This is a document specifically concerned with providing advice on how community groups can best manage income from renewables. Support agencies more commonly produce documents advising how to find money, not how to spend it. Nevertheless, as the publication of this guide also suggests, such power also brings its own decision-making challenges.

As CLIs primarily develop renewables projects to export energy to generate income, rather than for local use, these projects are fundamentally concerned with engagement with the world beyond the local – even before one considers the need to import technology and expertise. The attempts by community actors in Sleat to generate renewable energy have not yet (at the time of writing) come to fruition, yet illustrate key power issues for community generators more widely: questions over finance and relationships with energy sector companies, accessing economic power through FITs, and connecting energy projects to the National Grid. Underlying these are deeper issues of the relationships between actors with different geographical scales of operation, including companies and governments; and community access to energy sector decision-making spaces. This section will briefly discuss these issues, both in general and in relation to the case study of Sleat.

The very formation of Sleat Community Trust was linked to a proposal by Npower to build a “wind farm” on Sleat. Specifically, the Trust was created in order to have a local body that could receive “community benefit” payments. A first notable point about this wind farm on Sleat is that it was not built: Npower dropped the project. While the proposal acted as a catalyst to community empowerment activity, its direct contribution
to community empowerment – through money, jobs, skills or other changes – was therefore nil. This illustrates the relationship between power and place, in the sense of spatial scale of operation. For the energy company, Sleat was only one potential site among many; while for Sleat Community Trust, Sleat was the only site they were interested in. While it may be countered that the Trust works in many different fields – i.e. renewable energy is not the only activity they are interested in – it remains the case that income generation is a “strategic life issue” for any development trust, and renewable energy generation is currently seen as an exceptionally lucrative land use. So in this respect, this privileged position of the renewable energy industry gives translocal energy companies a power advantage in their relationship with local community groups.

Community groups are engaging as relatively small-scale actors in a large and growing market. This has implications for their engagement with the formal decision-making spaces of public policy, as well as directly with companies. The Scottish Government has established a consultation group on community energy, supported by Community Energy Scotland, in which Sleat Community Trust participates. This is clearly an invited space, and its degree of power over Scottish energy policy is not clear. Furthermore, much energy policy is made by the UK rather than the Scottish Government. The incentive framework that includes FITS is set at UK level: renewable energy income generation is therefore vulnerable to changes in government policy. The UK government may change the incentive framework to a fundamentally different and more complex “contracts of difference” system. While large energy companies may have the resources to engage with greater complexity and risk, smaller community companies may struggle. Yet if the community energy sector is only a small part of the Scottish energy industry, it is even smaller at UK level, leading to significant challenges for accessing spaces for influencing decision-making.

However, two factors in particular allow community groups to reclaim some of the power in the relationship with energy companies: the development planning process, and the possibility of developing their own renewables capacity. Firstly, it has become standard practice for companies installing wind turbines to offer payments to local community organisations, such as SCT was created to receive (Munday et al 2011, HIE 2013a). This payment can be seen in several ways: a socially-conscious effort to share the proceeds; as compensation for the disturbance and loss of visual amenity; or as a
pay-off intended to minimise local objections to the development in the planning process. The latter two views emphasise power struggles between energy companies and local residents, and see payments from the former to the latter as attempts to either hide conflict, or create the possibility for interests of both parties to be aligned rather than in conflict, by giving local residents something to gain too. Certainly, wind farms are notoriously controversial developments, often attracting intense opposition, and there is some evidence to suggest that community involvement in the developments mitigates such opposition (Upham et al 2009: 64, Warren and McFadyen 2010).

Regarding self-generation, it is true that on the one hand, regardless of what motivates community benefit payments, such payments do generally represent a significant sum of money at local level, for which little work need be done and which places the community organisation at little financial risk. However, one study of wind turbines elsewhere suggests that the likely income to any community body from local community benefit payments is far less than the likely income from wind farms owned by the community body. The authors found that community owned turbines in Gigha and Fintry in Scotland were generating incomes for their local groups at least ten times greater than the most generous community benefit schemes then in existence (Munday et al 2011: 9). The Scottish register of community benefit payments from commercial renewables projects shows that such payments are typically less then £5000 per MW of installed capacity: very much less than the revenue that a community-owned project might produce.

In Sleat, the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative hydro-electric scheme for the Allt Duisdale reservoir was designed to take advantage of FITS payments. In summer 2011, downward changes in FITS prices were expected and there was concern among CDI members to get the hydro scheme operational by March 2012, in order for it to be operational for the previous level of payments. In the event, this did not happen, as the project hit delays and the CDI's focus moved to the Sustainable Community Hub process. The hydro project should remain eligible for FITS, if and when it becomes operational.

Securing a connection to the National Grid has become a particular point of contention for community energy schemes in the Highlands and Islands. The case of Sleat Community Trust offers a good example of the issues. The grid in Scotland is operated
by Scottish Hydro-Electric Transmission Limited (SHETL), part of the same group of companies as Scottish and Southern Energy, a major electricity generator in its own right. New connections to the grid are allocated on a “first come first served” basis. Their activation is dependent on their being sufficient capacity in the grid infrastructure to take the electricity being generated. However, in many parts of the Highlands, including Skye, there is currently little spare capacity in the grid. Having been working on a wind turbine project for some years, in 2011 the SCT paid a deposit of over £9000 to secure its place in the queue. After some time, it then learned that there would not be sufficient capacity to take any electricity for some years. At this point SCT began to explore options for protesting and/or reclaiming the deposit it had paid.

As well as local-national power relations, there may be local-local struggles over access to what grid capacity is available. While SCT was developing its wind turbine scheme, the Clan Donald Lands Trust was also working on one, as was (at a smaller scale) the Grazings Committee of one of the crofting townships. Existing grid capacity was insufficient to accommodate all three developments: not all could go ahead. A perceived conflict of interest led to the resignation of a Sleat Renewables director who was working for the Clan. Nevertheless, to date, none of these schemes have come to fruition.

These cases illustrate the complexity of the system and the existence of decision-making spaces that appear still very “closed” to community groups and the wider public. And while investment in grid infrastructure upgrading is underway (Scottish Government 2011: 56-57), this will take years to be completed – by which time further projects are likely to be in preparation, again outstripping grid capacity. In the light of these political and logistical difficulties with accessing the grid, Community Energy Scotland, the support body for community energy groups, are currently investigating the feasibility of generating energy purely for local supply. Discussion at the Community Land Scotland conference 2013 highlighted that this would have to use the local grid infrastructure without affecting the national supply, which presents considerable technical difficulties in most contexts. However, it was also noted that any such generation would still be eligible for FITs, meaning that schemes might still be financially viable. CES estimate that they might be able to generate at relatively low
cost which could be passed on to local consumers, thus helping to reduce local fuel poverty.

**f. Conclusion**

This chapter has traced power relations around land and community in the Highland and Islands across time and place. Historically, it appears that greater engagement with wider networks of power led to decision-making with regard to land use shifting away from the region. This also brought changes in social and economic structures, and in decision-makers’ perceptions of land and community, that conflicted with many pre-existing regional practices and beliefs.

The history of the region has contributed to land ownership being a political issue in the Highlands and Islands today. In part, this has been through its material legacy: the patterns of settlement and land use established during the nineteenth century are still much in evidence today. It has also been through social and cultural processes, whereby various periods in the region's history have been recalled and interpreted in the service of present-day concerns: whether with regard to establishing ethnic or national identity, arguing for investment in the region, or debating land ownership and use. These interpretations are contested: there is no one view that is unanimously shared. However, what is widely shared among the population of the Highlands and Islands is the debate about the history of the region as something potentially significant for present day policy and practice; and an awareness of land ownership as a central issue in this debate.

The Highlands and Islands are unusual in the OECD in that they are a largely sparsely populated area whose population has nevertheless been rising in recent decades. The land of the region is a valued resource, but often for uses other than agriculture. Further, while in some respects contemporary regional concerns with economic diversification, ageing population and rural service delivery are widespread in the OECD, the region possesses some distinctive institutions in regard to community and economic development and the control of land. At regional level, Highlands and Islands Enterprise provides resources for development and spaces where issues of community and resource control can be raised in development policy debates; regionally and locally, there is the crofting system with its organisational infrastructure. These
structural features, together with the ongoing debate about land, power and community in the region's history, constituted the conditions for the emergence of the community land ownership movement in the 1990s.

Community land initiatives have responded to this historical and contemporary context with an approach that has underlying it a concern for community survival, as suggested by the priority placed on demographic indicators as measures of success. Their actions can be seen as attempting both to increase individuals' local options in making their strategic life choices, and to create a sense of community of place. The former goal is addressed through work facilitating the growth of economic opportunities, and social provision including housing and venues for socialising; and the latter through projects tying notions of the community to the natural environment, and the culture and history, of its locality. The history of local disempowerment, with decisions over resources made in closed spaces or faraway places, is seen as a key cause of local individual's constrained choices and long-term community decline: local decision-making is emphasised as the key to reversing this.

Yet from the outset, this movement - while emerging at a very local level, and with a strong attachment to place at its heart - was building extra-local relationships. These relationships have often been collaborative, and generated power for CLIs through giving them access to vital resources, notably funding, but also advice. As the movement has grown, so has the complexity and scale of this extra-local involvement. Contemporary CLIs must maintain relations with other actors locally, regionally and nationally, while being aware that their engagement at each level will be watched and reacted to by actors at other levels and in other spaces in which they participate. Thus, debates with government officials over the definitions of their community may fundamentally affect access to their local decision-making spaces; their relationship with funding bodies generates comment among local residents; their relationship with local residents, at least as evidenced in “visible” manifestations of power such as ballot results, affects their dealings with Land Reform Act officials or other public agencies. Whilst in many respects they are local bodies, in terms of membership, and immediate direction and purpose, their operation enmeshes them in much wider networks of power relations; what they can do locally is significantly affected by their engagement in these.
Chapter Five  Community in Sleat: the context for community initiatives

a. Introduction
In this chapter, the thesis moves from the spaces, forms of power and relationships surrounding individual cases of community land ownership, to the study of two CLIs at local level: Sleat Community Trust, and the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative, both based in the Sleat peninsula. This chapter, and the two that follow, is thus substantially based on observational and interview data collected through fieldwork in Sleat, supplemented by documentary and statistical data from secondary sources.

The first section gives a brief overview of contemporary Sleat, including its demography, economy, social infrastructure, patterns of community organisation (other than CLIs), and land ownership. The following section examines local people's interpretations of the actuality of community in Sleat. An association between community and ideals of how local life should be lived was evident in the data, and a further section presents this material.

In the later Discussion chapter, the material in this chapter will be revisited and analysed in relation to the material on community groups and land ownership. Social and cultural aspects of community are important for the analysis, as they affect local power relations in many ways. These include, for example: who is connected to whom through social networks of family, friends and work colleagues; the relationship between localities, social interaction and community identities; ideas about what community is, or what it should mean; and about who and what is included and excluded by these different ideas. All of these factors create the context in which community land initiatives must operate.

b. An overview of Sleat

Location and demography
Sleat – pronounced “slate” - is the anglicised name given to the southernmost peninsula of the Isle of Skye, which lies off the west Highland mainland. The Gaelic name is Sleite, in turn thought to be derived from the Norse sletta, a plain or level field (Gaelic Placenames undated). The climate of Skye is relatively wet and windy by UK
Figure 5.1 Map of Sleat

Source: Collins 2011.
standards; the terrain is moorland and mountains. The interior of Sleat is relatively low moorland, rising to just under 1000 feet above sea level. However, the Sleat peninsula extends southwest from the centre of the Skye, near to the mainland. It is therefore relatively sheltered, particularly on the eastern coast, and the vegetation along the coastal strip is lusher than many other parts of the island. Sleat has therefore long been known as “the Garden of Skye”, a name referring more to its sheltered and decorative aspects than to agricultural production (Am Baile undated). Despite this, and while Sleat does contain seven small SSSIs, a smaller proportion of the peninsula is covered by environmental designations than is the case for much of the rest of Skye (Holland et al 2011: 106-112).

The population of Skye is just over 10,000 (Highland Council 2012). The major centre of population in Skye is Portree, the island capital, located roughly in the centre of the island. Then there are two smaller centres, in the north west (Dunvegan) and the south (Broadford), and over the bridge to the mainland there is Kyle of Lochalsh.

The population of the Sleat peninsula as a whole was 795 in 2001 (Census data 2001), and today has grown to 913 (National Records of Scotland 2011). The population has grown rapidly over the last few decades, as can be seen from Figure 5.2. In fact from 1971 to 2011, Sleat's population more than doubled. Figure 5.3 shows that the age profile of Sleat is broadly similar to Skye as a whole, and to the Eilean Siar and Highland Council areas. The one exception is that the population of Sleat has an unusually high number of 20-34 year olds, attributable to the presence of students at the Gaelic college.

Figure 5.4 shows that, again like the rest of Skye, almost a quarter of the population of Sleat were born in England. This is a higher figure than for Highland as a whole, and in particular than for Eilean Siar. (Migration within Scotland is not so easily traceable in census data.)
Figure 5.2 Population of Sleat over time

Source: Sleat Local History Society undated, National Records of Scotland 2011.
Figure 5.3 Population by age: Sleat in context

All figures in percentages of total area population.
Source: Author’s calculation from National Records of Scotland 2011.

Figure 5.4 Population by country of birth: Sleat in context

All figures in percentages of total area population.
Source: Author’s calculation from National Records of Scotland 2011.
As will become clear in the course of the fieldwork chapters, the Gaelic language is a major cultural issue in Sleat. Just under half the population have some skills in Gaelic, with around 29% of the population fully literate (National Records of Scotland 2011).

**Infrastructure**

Skye is connected to the Scottish mainland by the Skye Bridge between Kyleakin (on Skye) and Kyle of Lochalsh (mainland). It is around 9 miles by road from the Druimfearn road end, the most northerly part of Sleat, to the Skye Bridge. The other principal connection between Skye and the mainland is the ferry running from Armadale in Sleat to Mallaig on the mainland – the journey is 30 minutes and ferries run 8 times a day each way in the summer (Caledonian MacBrayne 2012). The ferry is operated by Caledonian MacBrayne, a publicly-owned company that operates the majority of ferries in the Hebrides.

The main road to/from Broadford runs along the east coast as far as the ferry terminal at Ardvasar. This road used to be a winding single track road, and was upgraded to two lanes between 1997 and 2008 at a cost of £16m (Press and Journal 2008). All the other roads on Sleat are still single track with passing places. There are two major single track roads: one runs four miles south from Armadale through Ardvasar to Aird; the other is the “loop road” connecting the west coast settlements to the main east coast road. Then, many settlements have a winding single track road connecting the houses to the main road. Finally, Point of Sleat is not served by a public or tarmac road, but a hilly and rocky track extending two miles from the public road end at Aird.

Bus services on Sleat consist of a single route, connecting Armadale with Broadford, with stops along the main road in between. Sometimes buses go the extra few hundred yards to Ardvasar, along the narrower road. There are no services to Aird, or on the “loop” road to the west. The services are generally provided by Stagecoach, although in 2011-12 the summer service was operated by a Lochalsh-based contractor. Regardless of operator, services are much more frequent in the summer (tourist) season than in the winter, when there might be as little as two buses a day each way. There are no Citylink coach services in Sleat, but residents use services that stop in Broadford to travel to Inverness or Glasgow.
There are no rail services on Skye, but there are rail terminals at both Mallaig and Kyle of Lochalsh. From Mallaig there are daily services to Fort William and Glasgow (taking 80 minutes to Fort William but five hours to Glasgow); from Kyle trains run to Inverness (around 2½ hours).

Skye no longer has a regular air service, although an airstrip exists at Aashaig near Broadford that was in use until 1988 (BBC 2011). In this respect it is typical of the inner Hebrides, although many of the islands further from the Scottish mainland do have scheduled air services to Inverness, Aberdeen and Glasgow. A campaign (“Fly Skye”), led by the principal of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig among others, is currently trying to get services reinstated.

The public services based in Sleat are largely located at Kilbeg, with a health centre (GP practice) and primary school next door to each other, and to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. There are two GPs, a husband and wife team, who are local residents. The husband was chair of Sleat Community Trust for three years until last autumn; he remains a director of the Trust. The primary school, Bun Sgoil Sleite, is a Gaelic-medium school, with an English-medium unit to cater for those children whose parents did not wish them to receive education through Gaelic. Gaelic-medium and English-medium pupil numbers have fluctuated over the past decade. There are also two post offices, one operated by Sleat Community Trading Ltd (a subsidiary of the Community Trust) at Armadale, and the other operated by a local woman from her house in Duisdale.

For other services, Sleiteachs travel further afield. There are Highland Council “service points” in Broadford and Portree (and also Kyle of Lochalsh), which are the “front line offices” for residents to engage face to face with Council services – reporting faults, or paying Council Tax, for example (Highland Council undated). There is a “cottage hospital” at Broadford; for more serious illness or operations, Raigmore in Inverness is the principal hospital. There is a secondary school for the whole of Skye in Portree. Some Sleat pupils board at the local authority hostel there, but most must take the daily bus service.

University level education is of course available on site at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, but only for those wishing to pursue a relatively small range of Gaelic-medium courses in the arts, media and social sciences. The college is designed as a national-level specialist
institution, rather than a local general provider. There is a branch of West Highland College UHI in Broadford, but it appears that most school leavers, if going to University, travel outwith the area; often to Glasgow, according to one research participant.

While not publicly provided services, shopping facilities are a key part of the infrastructure of any contemporary community. The principal resource used by Sleiteachs is the large Co-op store in Broadford, which also has a petrol station attached. Broadford also has a number of other retail businesses. However, despite this formidable competition, there are two small shops selling food in Sleat: the Ardvasar Food Stores, and the Sleat Community Trading shop.

The former, owned by the tenant of the Clan Donald Home Farm at Armadale and thus locally referred to as “Billy Currie's” rather than by its official name, crams tinned and fresh groceries, newspapers and magazines, dairy and other household products onto its shelves. The range and quality of products were said to have improved in recent years:

\[
\text{we used to say that the only green thing in there was the bread... but it's better now}
\]

said one Sleat resident. It also operates as newsagents and off-licence.

The Sleat Community Trading shop boasts a cashpoint and tourist information services, but stocks a very limited range of groceries and soft drinks. Finally, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has recently installed a cashpoint and started selling national daily newspapers. This responds to demand from its resident students, but also creates another resource for the people of Sleat, and competition for the other two businesses.

In Sleat, then, the domestic shopping infrastructure (as opposed to gifts and tourist shopping) is aimed at essentially a convenience market. All other things being equal, the further south in Sleat you live, and the less you need to buy, the more likely you are to shop local; but the further north and/or the more you are buying, the more the cost in fuel and time of travelling to Broadford becomes worthwhile. There is still some feeling of supporting the local, however. One local community activist in Camuscross was described to me as:
one of the few people who turns left at the main road
i.e. he sometimes heads south to shop at and support local businesses, rather than automatically turn right to Broadford and the supermarket.

Housing
The great majority of Sleat households own their own homes (71%: Census data 2011). However, around one quarter of households rent, either from social landlords such as the local authority (4.5%) or housing associations (9%), or from private landlords (13%; all figures Census data 2011).

Settlements in Sleat are today mainly found along the more sheltered east coast, facing the mainland, as the map (Figure 5.1) indicates. The largest settlements are Ardvazar/Armadale, Teangue/Saasaig, Camuscross/IsleOrnsay, and Kilmore and Kilbeg. Ardvazar and Armadale are both notable for being quite compact settlements, with bungalows, terraces and semi-detached housing giving an almost suburban look to them. The other settlements are more extensive and houses are much more scattered.

It is likely that this reflects their different development histories. Extensive settlements have developed more incrementally from a scattered crofting township pattern, with houses being built as crofters sold plots for development or allotted them to their families. Much of the housing in Armadale and Ardvazar has been built en bloc; this is where most of the social housing in Sleat is found (around 30% of households in these settlements: Census data 2011). Nevertheless, very small terraces or bungalow social housing developments – four or five houses - do exist elsewhere e.g. at Ferindonald, and Toravaig near Teangue.

Economy
Figures 5.5 and 5.6 show that Sleat's economic activity rates follow that of Skye, showing a higher proportion of self-employment and lower rates of full- and part-time employment than for the wider Highlands. The influence of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig can be seen not only in the relatively high number of students, but also in those employment in managerial and professional occupations. Yet while there is evidently substance to the characterisation of Sleat as “newly affluent” (West Highland Free Press 2011), it is clear
also that substantial numbers of Sleiteachs work in other occupations, that may be less well paid.

In Sleat, the major economic activities are, as in much of the Highlands, public services and tourism. Indeed, when higher education at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is included in public services, then these two sectors account for around half the employment in Sleat (National Records of Scotland 2011).

The tourist economy is centred on accommodation, some outdoor activity services, the Clan Donald centre (restaurant, gift shop, museum and gardens) and a cluster of art/craft shops around Armadale pier where the Mallaig ferry docks. There is a secondary micro-cluster in IsleOrnsay, with hotel/restaurant/bar, tweed shop, and art gallery, that caters for yachting and cruise ship visitors (with prices to match). Then there are several other artists with studio-galleries around the peninsula including in Aird, Tarskavaig and Camuscross. Accommodation consists of a small number of rather expensive hotels; a larger number of bed and breakfast providers; and a large number of holiday houses, but it is not clear how many of these are locally owned. Both estates offer hunting and fishing packages, as well as other outdoor activities. There is also a yacht charter business (Isle of Skye yachts), sightseeing boat trips operator (Seafari), canoe instruction (Skyak), and more.

The Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, employs 87 full-time staff and 54 part-time, as academic, managerial, librarian, student support, IT, administrative, kitchen, gardening and maintenance staff. The annual budget for 2010-11 was £4.6 million. In addition to direct employment, it also brings a student population into the area. It has accommodation for up to 84 students on site, and in addition to higher education students resident during term-time, has up to 750 students on residential short courses at Easter and over the summer (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education 2011: 1).

There is more to the economy in Sleat. There are the small shops aimed at local households mentioned above under infrastructure, which employ perhaps three FTEs between them. There are a number of small businesses not primarily aimed at the tourist market: the garage (also mentioned above) in Armadale, a furniture workshop, a
kennels/pet boarding service, and others; and again, some people work from home via the internet.

Agriculture is a relatively small part of the economy of the area. A recent SNH publication reported a decline in livestock numbers in Sleat over the last 10 years, particularly for sheep (Holland et al 2011: 113-114), although noting that in some areas of Sleat livestock numbers were showing some small increases. The report highlights Camuscross as an example of this, while data presented in it suggests increases also in Duisdale, and to a lesser extent Teangue and Kilmore (Holland et al 2011: 119, 122). However, in interviews, local residents typically estimated that there were less than ten people in the peninsula making a living primarily out of crofting agriculture.

Of course, people travel beyond the peninsula to work also. A few are employed in the North Sea oil fields. Some self-employed workers regularly travel for work, for example, a stonemason, or a musician. Some public service workers are nominally based in Portree, Kyle of Lochalsh, or even Fort William: they may not commute daily, but will travel the island or the wider region regularly. The ease of connection to the mainland, and the growth of Lochalsh as an administrative centre for much of the west Highlands, has economic and potentially community-political implications for Sleat. It opens up a further number of relatively well-paid jobs, and it also notable that both the Scottish Crofters' Federation (SCF), and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Community Land Unit (CLU), are based in Lochalsh (they are neighbours on the Auchtertyre Business Park). At least one member of staff of the CLU is resident in Sleat, and a number of Sleat residents work or have worked for the SCF. Finally, Sleat's economy also draws workers in. For example, a number of people commute from parts of Lochalsh to jobs in shops on Armadale Pier.
Figure 5.5 Economic activity rates: Sleat in context

All figures in percentages of total area population aged 16-74.
Source: Author’s calculation from National Records of Scotland 2011.

Figure 5.6 Occupations of working population: Sleat in context

All figures in percentages of total area population in employment.
Source: Author’s calculation from National Records of Scotland 2011.
Powers over land

Sleat is an example of an area where issues of land ownership have had a particularly significant impact on economic and community development and power relations. As noted above, Sleat was historically in the possession of the Clan Donald. In the modern era, what this means is that almost the entire peninsula was a single estate owned by one person, the chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat. However, in the twentieth century the Forestry Commission did acquire land in the south of the peninsula, having established commercial timber plantations at Tormore between Ardvasar and Aird, and at the northern edge of the peninsula as part of the larger Kinloch Hills plantation.

This pattern was disrupted significantly in 1970 with the death of the then Lord MacDonald. Faced with a demand from the Inland Revenue for death duties which would apparently leave him with no option but to sell the estate, his son, encouraged by other Clan Donald society members in Scotland, set out to purchase the estate in the name of the Clan (MacDonald 2011). He embarked on a global fundraising drive in the MacDonald diaspora and enough money was raised, chiefly from people of MacDonald ancestry in North America, to purchase around half of the Sleat peninsula. Thus in July 1971, the newly-formed Clan Donald Lands Trust bought the southern portion of Sleat, which included the long-ruined clan base of Armadale Castle. The northern portion of the peninsula was sold to an Edinburgh-based merchant banker, Iain Noble. An enthusiast for the Gaelic language and culture, Mr (later Sir) Noble named his estate Fearann Eilean Iarmain (FEI, “the lands of Isle Ornsay”) and made his headquarters at IsleOrnsay/Eilean Iarmain.

In the four decades since that historic division of the peninsula, there has been relatively little large-scale change in the pattern of land ownership in Sleat. Sir Iain Noble died in late 2010, but his estate appears to have been inherited by his widow, Lady Lucilla Noble, and she is still resident in IsleOrnsay. It appears that the two other historic ruined castles, at Knock and Dunscaith, were sold by FEI, but there is uncertainty locally as to who owns them. There is a large area of forest on the central moorland between Duisdale, Teangue and Ord, known as the Brae Ord forest, which was owned by Lord Sainsbury at the time of fieldwork. As noted above, there are a small number of public and housing association-owned housing developments scattered along the east coast.
Finally, of course, there are many privately-owned houses and gardens on Sleat, often built on former croft land sold by the tenants.

As noted earlier in the thesis, “ownership” is not a simple notion, and property rights are better thought of in terms of the distribution of bundles of powers relating to land, that may change over time. The property rights associated with ownership have been moderated not only with the introduction and growth of the development planning system, but also with the legal establishment of crofting tenure following the 1886 Act, as discussed in the previous chapter. Large areas of Sleat are held under crofting tenure: the entire central area enclosed by the loop road is common grazings, with individual township grazings around the edge, and “Sleat General” common grazings in the middle. Other townships outwith the loop road area – Aird, Calligary, Camuscross, Duisdale and Druimfearn – also have inbye and common grazing land under crofting tenure. Nevertheless, there are substantial areas of land, particularly towards the southern and northern edges of the peninsula, that are not under crofting tenure and landowners’ powers are therefore the greater.

**Community organisations other than the two CLIs**

The first thing to note about community organisation in Sleat is that - even allowing for the relatively high rates of volunteering in rural Scotland (Woolvin 2012: 2) - for an area with less than 1000 people, there is a lot of it. One indicator is that the Ardvasar Village Hall runs a series of “café” events in the Hall in the summer, where a local organisation rents the Hall, provides nourishment and (volunteer) staff, and then can keep the proceeds. The Hall appears to have had little difficulty in 2011 in filling two weeks of café slots with local organisations willing to run a café, and in 2012 a further ten cafés have been organised, each by a different group.

There are two village hall associations, which operate Ardvasar Village Hall and Tarskavaig Communities Hall. Membership of both Hall committees is centred on the village that they are located in, but not confined to this – there are committee members from further afield also. The Halls are used for a range of functions, daytime and evening, from playgroups to music nights.
The main religious organisations on Sleat are the Sleat and Strath Church of Scotland and the Sleat and Strath Free Church of Scotland. Both hold regular services in church buildings in Sleat. Attached to the Church of Scotland is the Guild – formerly the Women's Guild – which has a local branch and is locally active in holding charitable events.

The most prominent sporting organisation is the Sleat and Strath Football Club, which plays in an amateur league. The club plays its home games at a pitch next to the forest at Kinloch at the north end of Sleat. A number of Sleat-based club members established a company, Kinloch Ltd, and worked for some years on plans for a major redevelopment of the facilities at Kinloch, with talk of joint ventures with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and the Community Trust. However, in 2011 the club decided to build a new pitch in Broadford, and Kinloch Ltd has been wound up. There is no Sleat shinty team, although some residents recalled that in the past, Tarskavaig alone fielded two well-regarded teams. There are a number of other sporting and recreation clubs (including bowls, badminton and hillwalking).

Sleat has an active local arts and culture group, SEALL, which promotes a wide range of music, theatre and film activities. (There is a “Club Film” sub-group.) This was founded in the 1970s by Duncan MacInnes, a resident of Kilbeg who still runs it, and has also been very prominent in Sleat Community Trust. SEALL tends to use the facilities at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig for performances, although the Clan Donald's restaurant is also used on occasion. The SEALL programme runs year round, and features performers from around the world, and a mix of both traditional Highland music and topics with classical music concerts, international film screenings (I saw an Iranian domestic drama at one well-attended Saturday night event) and also children's events.

There are other promoters and sites of formal “cultural” activity in Sleat. There is a traditional or pop/rock band playing in the bar at the Eilean Iarmain Hotel (“the EI”) most Friday nights; blues music every Monday evening in Tarskavaig Communities Hall; and a number of less formal traditional music sessions. The College also has a cultural life of its own, with regular music sessions in the bar in the evenings and occasional parties and special events. These do not seem to attract a large turnout from the community outwith the College, although College staff and students are to be found...
at other events. There are several artists and sculptors living and working in the area, some with their own shops and galleries. There is also a gallery space, An Talla Dearg, as part of the Eilean Iarmain Estate buildings, which shows a range of visiting and local artists' work over the summer season.

There are a number of other local groups. There are two playgroups: Sleat Playgroup (English-speaking, based in Ardvasar Village Hall) and Fas Mor (Gaelic-speaking childcare, based in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig). Then there are other social and discussion groups, such as an active branch of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute, and a book group that has recently established itself.

There are also locally-active groups whose concerns and membership run beyond the peninsula. The Skye and Lochalsh Environment Group has some active local members. A number of health charities are well supported, for example Friends of Broadford Hospital; and fundraising is at times undertaken for popular Highland charitable causes such as Crossroads Care (local care provider), or Lucky2bHere (local heart disease charity). Some members of the local Church of Scotland are also involved in supporting a school in Malawi.

**The future for Sleat: Sleiteachs' views**

In the early days of the Sleat Community Trust, SCT commissioned the University of Strathclyde's Conservation and Development in Sparsely Populated Areas project (CADISPA) to undertake a community consultation on what a community trust might do. This Scoping Study involved questionnaires distributed throughout the community, as well as workshops with primary school children and high school pupils boarding in the Highland Council hostel in Portree. Seven years later, Aigas Associates were commissioned to carry out a follow up questionnaire survey coupled with interviews with key local figures (in addition to a business review of SCT itself) – such a follow-up review being a fairly standard procedure recommended by HIE to community land initiatives. These, together with fieldwork data on what people saw as important issues in Sleat (a subtly different question to what issues people thought a community trust might deal with), help provide some idea of what Sleiteachs feel needs doing, and set the context for the study of what CLIs have actually done.
The CADISPA study highlighted the following priorities for the Trust: sports and social facilities; activities for young people; economic development and diversification; affordable housing; transport; and cultural activities including Gaelic. It said (Fagan et al 2004: 4):

the Trust must become a strong voice for the people of Sleat and to [sic] overcome any sense of disempowerment that may be felt by the community.

Seven years later, future priorities identified in the community consultation (Bryan 2012) were rather similar. One notable absence was any mention of sports facilities; and a significant new priority was facilities for older people. Otherwise, housing, facilities for younger people, transport, and economic development and diversification – in the specifically SCT-related shapes of the woodfuel business in the community forest, improvements to the Armadale Filling Station and shop, and renewable energy – were also popular priorities.

c. Communities of Sleat – practices and beliefs

The remainder of this chapter considers community in Sleat. This first section outlines prevailing practices and beliefs about the existing community – or communities – of Sleat. It draws primarily on qualitative interview data, combined with some observation of patterns of behaviour and practice obtained during fieldwork.

Geographies of place-based community

Sleat is not a community. I don't mean it's broken down – it never was one community – there are lots of them.

('Murray', SCT activist)

While the quotation above might seem paradoxical coming from someone involved with the Sleat Community Trust, it is a theme that emerges strongly from the data. It seems that the primary place-based communities that are recognised by people in Sleat are the townships or villages, rather than the peninsula as a whole. In 2011 the directors of Sleat Community Trust received a letter from a resident of Druimfearn, in the north end of Sleat, complaining that everything the Trust did was at the south end. “When are you going to do something for us?” was said to be the complaint: this individual did not feel that action in Armadale or Aird was for all of Sleat. Again, when the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative held their first community consultation regarding their proposed “sustainable community hub” building, all of Sleat was invited; but participants in the
event from outwith Camuscross and Duisdale were given different coloured post-it
notes to write their comments on. A CDI director explained to me that this was so that
the views of people from “here” and elsewhere on Sleat could be distinguished and
compared if felt necessary – in particular, to demonstrate support for the project from
within the immediate locality.

In fact the very existence of a Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative is indicative of this
feeling. The Initiative had been formed by Camuscross residents apparently frustrated at
the slow pace of progress with SCT projects and the lack of projects based at their end
of the peninsula.

so you had all these people who were involved in the Trust in the early stages,
and they said right, we're not particularly happy with the speed of progress that
the Trust is making, they're looking at other things, why don't we just look after
ourselves, and see what we can manage?
('James', Sleat resident, February 2012)

I suppose the question is, why could they, not have got involved with the Trust
to get their area, could it have been done through the whole community Trust,
but then it would have gone through the whole prejudice thing, 'oh why up there
why not down here' sort of thing.
('Ruaridh', resident of south end of Sleat, May 2012)

The determination of what counts as a village or township (both terms are used) in Sleat
seems to be related to the crofting infrastructure. In general, a settlement with its own
common grazings is seen as an independent village. These are Achnacloich, Aird,
Camuscross, Drumfearn, Duisdale, Ferindonald, Kilbeg, Kilmore, Saasaig, Teangue,
Tarskavaig, and Tokavaig. The salience of crofting can be illustrated with the case of
Teangue and Saasaig: today the two settlements merge into one another, the physical
transition marked by little other than road signs. There is a small stream that separates
them, and one Sleat resident recalled hearing a tradition that young men of each village
would meet annually at the stream to fight with sticks. However, today the stream is
hardly noticeable from the road bridges over it. Nevertheless, the separate identity of
the places is preserved – people are said to live in one or the other, not “Teangue and
Saasaig” as might be said – and they maintain separate crofting infrastructures.

However, the above list is not exhaustive. That there is more to place-definition than
crofting is illustrated by the settlement of Ord. This is not a crofting settlement – it does
not have crofts or a common grazings – yet is clearly recognised as “a place”. It is physically compact and separate from other settlements on the peninsula. Similarly, the tiny settlement of Point of Sleat – with two resident households and two holiday homes in regular use – is recognised as a community or a separate place. Point of Sleat does not have a common grazing, but is represented at the Aird of Sleat committee. However, it is two miles down a rough track from the end of the public road at Aird of Sleat, so perhaps an element of physical geographical pragmatism in place-definition is being used here.

Looking more closely at the Camuscross and Duisdale area, the settlement of IsleOrnsay, or Eilean Iarmain, which lies around a small bay between Duisdale and Camuscross, and contiguous with both of them, seems to occupy an indeterminate status. Despite housing the headquarters of the important Eilean Iarmain estate, plus hotel, pub and art gallery, it is very small, with few residents, and does not have a separate common grazings. It tends to be treated rather as a district of the general Camuscross settlement. In contrast, the settlement of Duisdale, a little higher up the hill, is also not very big, but has its own common grazings and is very clearly an independent place. Residents of both have said that Camuscross and Duisdale are different communities, although closely connected; and the CLI is the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative, not the Camuscross, Duisdale and IsleOrnsay Initiative. Indeed the inclusion of Duisdale in what was originally the Camuscross Community Initiative is a longer story that will be explored in detail later.

I feel that Camuscross and Duisdale um, you know, we're there, we're combined, do you know what I mean, even although the crof-, the grazings committees are different people. But we are combined. Um, but Camuscross, I would never say I came from Duisdale, or Eilean Iarmain. I would only say I come from Camuscross.

('Lorna', Camuscross resident)

There are other places where people live which don't seem to fit easily into any neat “community map” pattern. For example, there is Toravaig, a small development of social housing and a luxury hotel, on the main road between Teangue and Duisdale; or Ostaig, a few houses along the coast which gave their name to the college of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (“the big barn at Ostaig”) when it was established in disused farm buildings in 1973. And there is Kylerhea, a tiny isolated settlement outwith the Sleat Community
Trust area, and apparently making no attempt to be included, but included by a few research participants in their definition of Sleat, and in the census statistics.

To summarise, Sleat is a place where people talk of multiple place-based communities. The geography of these communities is partly one of the crofting infrastructure, which roughly and mostly corresponds to the physical layout of crofting grazings.

On the other hand, it is not true to say there is no “Sleat feeling” at all. Such a feeling may be developing in connection with the existence of Sleat-wide institutions. One long-term resident expressed indignation when the Sleat and Strath Football Club decided to build a new pitch in Broadford, rather than at a long-discussed site at Kinloch in Sleat. He was clear that Broadford should not be taking over everything that “we” “here” built up (fieldwork observation, November 2011).

The existence of Sleat Community Trust might be building similar loyalties. One activist felt that one of the chief impacts that the Trust had had on Sleat was

   bringing a bit more unity to the community (…) now there's one organisation owned by the community
   ('Ross', SCT activist).

And the complaint noted above, about feeling left out of developments in the south of Sleat, does imply a feeling that the Trust should serve the entire peninsula.

**Crofting and community**

Figures from the Crofting Commission's Register of Crofts show that there are 208 crofters in Sleat. This means that there are 208 individual people with their names on the register of crofts in Sleat – and presumably, with voting rights in their local grazings committee. However, there are something less than 208 crofting households in Sleat. Some of the registered crofters are absentees. In a few cases, more than one person in a household is registered. Very few individuals are registered as having more than one croft, although it is possible that informal arrangements for people to use others' crofts exist.

Camuscross and Tarskavaig have the largest number of crofts; after them, Aird, Calligarry and Druimfearn have similar numbers; then only Achnacloich and Saasaig
have double figures of registered crofters. Not all registered crofters are active in agriculture, however; in fact, the majority are not. Nor are all crofters equally involved in the governance and politics of crofting. When these factors are taken into account, the crofting map of Sleat looks a little different. Camuscross and Tarskavaig are still prominent, being home to some active crofters and advocates of crofting. But the apparently small townships of Duisdale and Ferindonald both feature some very active crofters, including some who are prominent figures in the peninsula; and households largely sustaining themselves from agriculture can be found in the townships of Saasaig and Aird. Thus, active involvement in crofting and its politics – and by extension, issues around land – is in fact spread across the settlements of Sleat.

Each crofting settlement has its own common grazings and attendant grazings committee. In addition, the Sleat General Common Grazings is managed by a separate committee composed of all the shareholders in the grazings of Teangue, Saasaig, Kilmore, Achnacloich, Tarskavaig, and Tokavaig (around 75 people according to one member).

While only a small minority of Sleat crofters earn a substantial part of their income from crofting, many are agriculturally active in modest ways. And for all the population, crofting remains a potent cultural symbol, strongly associated with agriculture and land, community and tradition. The social interaction associated with crofting was suggested to be important to “community”. Thus the communal work associated with crofting – gathering livestock, burning the heather to encourage new growth (“muirburn” or “falasgeir”), cutting peats – was often said to promote “community spirit”. Sleat has its own crofting experts, on both agricultural experience and knowledge of the intricacies of crofting law and funding; local demand for this knowledge drives interactions and sustains informal social networks around crofting. Crofting law also privileges families – crofting tenancies can be inherited – thus connecting crofting and a gemeinschaft-like sense of community.

The relationship between the concepts of “community” and “crofting community” is also pertinent to power relations over land. Consider the following two quotations from interviews carried out in Sleat:
crofters are the minority, of the number of people in Sleat, the majority of the community are not crofters, and they are every bit as important as crofters, even if crofters might somehow think that somehow they have that higher standing than the rest of us - well they don't you know. I'm not saying that all crofters think like that, but I think some do (…) the common grazing used to belong, everybody could access it, it was for the community, that's why it's called the common grazing. It's not the private land of crofters. But they seem to think it is. ('Hamish', Sleat resident, non-crofter)

The croft is the crofter's. The croft land is croft land. It's not anybody else's land. The landlord may think it's their land but it's not, it's the crofter's land. (slight laugh) It's not the community's land! (…) you can see where the fear, of community, comes from. In the sense of, 40 years ago the crofters were the community. Today they're not. (…) But the crofters are still the ones who, create the environment, who maintain it, who do all the, who are, you know, the base, of the community.

('Iain', Sleat crofter)

Here the same demographic history is given two contrasting interpretations. Both speakers would agree that in-migration and changing patterns of work and settlement have led to croft tenants now being a minority within the wider “Sleat community”, rather than a substantial majority. However, whereas for the first this means that crofters' claims to powers over land should be moderated, in the second it is the wider community that should recognise that these claims should still be privileged over others. The basis for this is the meaning of “community”.

The first speaker identifies “community” with the whole population, and suggests that this is the sense it was intended in crofting legislation also: it wasn't made explicit in the legislation, because at that time crofters did constitute the whole population. He now feels that the meaning should be understood as having changed with the demography of the area. The second speaker explicitly rejects this. He sees several communities within Sleat, with different interests. This leads to a “fear of community” among those people now in a minority, the crofters, because “the whole power structure has changed”, and now “one section”, the wider community, is pursuing “the assets” - i.e. the land – of “another section”, the crofters. (Both discussions related to proposals for building a community building on common grazing land in Duisdale, that will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.) Here it is apparent that the official definition of a crofter used in establishing legal powers over land (and the compilation of Crofting Commission statistics) exists alongside multiple local meanings of the term. These meanings often relate to concepts of “localness” that will be discussed next.
**Locals and incomers**

As noted in Chapter Three in relation to accessing participants for interviews, the idea that there exists a distinct “local” consciousness often surfaced in the data. Simple residence in the locality was generally not what was being referred to. Instead, it was linked variously to genealogical ties to the present and historical population of the peninsula, personal and family background in crofting, or being brought up in Gaelic-speaking culture. The distinction between those who were merely local residents, and those who had this other status, was expressed by some by labelling the latter category of people as “local local”. Other terms used, sometimes as self-identification, were “native” and “indigenous”.

The literature on “locals” and “incomers” emphasises that the terms do not simply reflect demographic reality (Jedrej and Nuttall 1998: 9-13, Macleod and Payne 1994). Rather, they may be used for varying purposes – to help explain behaviour, or to draw boundaries around definitions of “community”. What relation does the Sleat cultural distinction between “locals” and others have to social behaviour and structures?

Firstly, it is clear that there has been social structural change in Sleat – almost a doubling of population in last 40 years – and much of this population increase has been through in-migration. Many in-migrants have been people from outwith the Highlands, either younger people seeking a particular kind of lifestyle, sometimes related to bringing up children; or older people retiring. There is also the College as a very visible agent of in-migration, recruiting people for jobs, and attracting students, some of whom have gone on to live locally.

However, Sleat is also characterised by demographic complexity. There are some people who are locally born, locally resident all their lives, and who can trace their family back several generations in Sleat. Then there are others who are recently settled, with no local connections beyond maybe a few visits on holiday. Yet, in between these two extremes there are many combinations of connections to the place and people. Some are returning to the place where they grew up, but have worked elsewhere all their adult life. Some have lived and worked elsewhere for a few years. Several of those with extended family connections had regularly visited the peninsula for childhood
holidays and grown up with a sense of it as “home”, despite mostly residing elsewhere.
Then some people – in the sample for this present study, generally women who had
come to work or study in the peninsula - had married in to a local family, and in that
way gained local connections. A simple division of the population into “local” and
“incomer” is not possible in any consistent way.

However, as might be expected from the cultural approach to community, these terms
were frequently used in connection with defining a moral status. Often there was a
positive association with “local”: thus one in-migrant recalled someone “local” telling
him approvingly after one exchange “you're beginning to think like us now!” Again,
when discussing one person who was at the centre of controversy for a while, people
supporting him would note that “his people belong to here”, while some who felt he had
acted wrongly or mistakenly noted that he was not born and brought up locally. The
importance and desirability of “local” participation in CLIs was noted by a range of
people, while some felt it was a criticism of the CLIs that they did not attract, in their
view, enough “local” members or activists. (Rarely, if ever, did anyone express concern
that “incomers” might be excluded from anything.)

On the other hand, as will be discussed in later chapters, several self-identified “locals”
suggested non-participation in formal initiatives was a local trait or “Highland thing”,
feeling that this was a less positive side to “local” culture. And less positive references
to local culture – e.g. in association with alcohol abuse, or hostility to change – were
occasionally made by in-migrants, although often with caution and qualifications.
Again, once or twice some expressed irritation with the moral status afforded being
“local”, in much the same way that a speaker already quoted suggested that “crofters”
should not be seen as above or apart from the rest of “the community”.

Questions of language become bound up with questions of community boundaries in
the Highlands and Islands, and perhaps particularly so in Sleat, with its Gaelic college
and high concentration of Gaelic activism. One feature of the College as a specifically
Gaelic institution is that it has brought Gaelic speaking in-migrants from the Western
Isles. One College employee, an in-migrant from outwith the Highlands and Islands,
was shocked that such people were sometimes grouped together with her as an
“outsider” in Sleat:
are native Gaelic speakers 'outsiders' here!?
('Mairi', Sleat resident)

Both this labelling, and the shock at it, show how local/outsider divisions are often more complex than outside observers think; and, again, that the term generally simplifies demographic realities.

**Class and nationality**

Class was not something explicitly probed for in interviews and conversations; and there are not many explicit references to social class in the data. However, it is implicit in a number of conversations, and often intertwined with more explicit references to nationality.

Typically, middle-class status was associated with being English. One English self-described “middle class” in-migrant drew a parallel between Sleat and an urban area where they had previously lived, where a:

white working-class (…) local population had had other populations plonked down on top of it
('Nicole', Sleat resident).

Occasionally, people born in Sleat, or with strong family connections to the area, spoke of being working-class. However, while the direct language of class was rarely used, there was talk of Sleat being composed of separate social groups, differentiated by wealth. Housing was one area where such comments were made. Fieldwork often involved visiting people in their houses, and a rough three way categorisation of houses into “old and unmodernised”; “1970s newbuild” and “new or modernised” fits much of the private housing in Sleat. The 1970s houses were often substantial bungalows lived in by older crofting households; the houses may have been built with assistance from the housebuilding grant schemes that crofting used to attract. Many of the newer category appear to be high quality houses, and are often large by the standards of the older-style croft houses. On occasion these attracted some derogatory comments from older people with local roots who appeared not so well off, and did not live in them. Phrases such as “millionaire's row” and “Disneyland” were used to describe areas where a few large new houses had gone up.
Other areas where class was referred to were in relation to the tourist trade, and crofting. The conversion of the former convenience store in IsleOrnsay to a relatively expensive tweed shop aimed at tourists was mentioned disparagingly by several people. As regards crofting, one participant in particular discussed class and in-migration in this context:

Farm labourers (…) were looked down on, they were the proletariat. Now the middle-class want to be that! But if they had to work the land like the crofters of 60 years ago, there's no way they would stay (…) it's a middle-class dream, living here (…) they've had wonderful jobs, been a consultant, a professor (…) and now 'I'm a crofter' – no!
('Catriona', Sleat crofter)

In this quotation (and the longer conversation of which it is a part), the speaker is concerned to distinguish between two different groups' claims to the crofting identity. True crofters are locally born people whose livelihood depended on working the land. Middle-class in-migrants are associated with having good incomes and economic choices; it is suggested that these are incompatible with “true” crofting; almost, that their choice to live on a croft invalidates their claim to be a crofter. This recalls the concept of strategic life choices discussed in chapter two: power, in the sense of the ability to make the strategic life choices of residence and occupation, is associated with middle-class status; crofting class status with a lack of this power. Attempts by in-migrants to associate themselves with the “crofter” identity are rejected on these grounds. On the other hand, the same speaker recognised that the class structure of “local” Sleat society had changed over the decades:

there's now a middle-class society among indigenous people – very few unskilled labourers
('Catriona', Sleat crofter).

Not all talk of class was so bitter: often it was laced with humour. The culture and etiquette of socialising is said to vary with social class:

'Martin': there's actually quite an English community, here; that we're not part of, by the way (…)

'Fiona': I don't see that as being any different just because… maybe like-minded folk do like-minded things

'Martin': Well we don't have that many crofters in the house over a glass of wine
'Fiona': No but we have a case of lager and you me and 'Andrew' might drink it all! (laughs) So is that not just a lower version of a few folk having some wine?!

(Sleat crofters)

The discussion here was quite good humoured, but still the close association between class, nationality, and socialising – vital to the practice of community relations (see below) – is notable.

_Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Gaelic_

Workplaces have been studied as sites of communities of interest. In Sleat, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, as both by far the largest single employer, and occupying a singular position in relation to community and culture, is a highly visible community of interest. It perhaps deserves a community study in its own right, as it connects people not only through the objective economic self-interest of sharing an employer, but also through association with the symbolic “Gaelic community”, whose language the college is tasked with promoting. (The Clan Donald Lands Trust, while also having the promotion of heritage - of the Clan Donald - in its charitable aims, does not have the same missionary feel to it, nor do its aims involve it in the culture of the area to the same extent.)

There are many ways in which the College is integrated into local social relations. A large proportion of the local population work there. Many local organisations use the premises: thus SEALL promotes around 40 events each year, the majority of which take place either in the College's lecture hall (e.g. films and classical concerts) or in the bar (traditional and jazz concerts). The facilities are sometimes used for public meetings by Sleat Community Trust and the Community Council; or for recreation by e.g. the Whist Club, and the Badminton Club. Staff and students can also regularly be found in the EI pub in IsleOrnsay, and will travel from elsewhere in Sleat to go there.

Despite this, there is a widespread perception of the College as cut-off from the Sleat community. There are several possible explanations for this perception. Firstly, it is not unusual for colleges anywhere to be seen as cut-off. They harbour a transient population of students (at SMO almost all resident on the premises) who are not known to the local residents. Even if they get to know local people, they leave after a few years. Also, while there is a wide range of jobs at the college, many of the posts are academic ones, on good salaries in terms of the local job market, and there is perhaps an element of class distinction at work here:
it's the reverse of the old Big House, when only the kitchen staff spoke Gaelic, in Sabhal Mòr the kitchen staff are about half Gaelic speaking so they conduct their meetings in English, but they're the only ones
('Adam', Sleat resident and SMO employee).

However, it may also be that this feeling of separation is related to the fact that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is a Gaelic college, and this brings it with certain expectations: as to what a college does, about the professional Gaelic world, and about which parts of the community it is for. So, although the College does engage with the rest of the population of Sleat, it is notable that there are no local part-time Gaelic courses. In fact courses are available, but on the same basis as for anyone else in the UK (or the world) – online and on telephone conference. At the same time, other Gaelic organisations do organise more conventional evening classes across the Highlands (e.g. the Ulpan classes). Then there is a perceived lack of outreach to local native speakers of the language, particularly older ones.

I know two Gaelic speakers, who are local people, who have lived here all their lives, they're quite elderly. Both of whom think, they're not derogatory of the College, but they don't think the College is relevant to them. Which given that they're Gaelic speakers, is odd, you know? And I don't think that the College reaches out to the local Gaelic-speaking community.
('Tom', Sleat resident)

There are some local native Gaelic speakers working at the college, particularly from the younger generation; and there is appreciation of the college as a Gaelic institution. Yet there does seem to be less involvement from the older generation. Some may attend events there but generally not Gaelic ones. It seems that there are few initiatives from the College to reach them\(^5\), and little sign of local Gaelic speakers trying to offer their services either: a lack of both supply and demand, as it were. This may be linked to a wider issue about the language, and a perceived clash between regional vernacular dialects, and a modernised standard Gaelic. Thus there is a perception that the college teaches either the “Queens Gaelic” (Sleat resident and non-Gaelic speaker) or a rather 'thin' non-vernacular Gaelic. A deeper cultural impasse was suggested by one person:

there's a new Gaelic culture coming in with the college, that's totally different. But you couldn't say that to them, they'd be so offended... I think that locals feel that the people coming in, learning Gaelic, are trying to take their identity away from them, to take over their culture

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\(^5\) This was not the main focus of my research, so my information on this subject is limited.
('Catriona', Sleat crofter)

The person making this comment did so carefully, and followed up with the suggestion that “Gaels” wouldn't tell me this themselves because they were “too polite”. Certainly this direct suggestion about fear of the appropriation of culture was an isolated comment. Yet it chimes with a broader perception of old and new Gaelic worlds, and such a feeling may be linked to other perceptions of change in the community as a threat, even – or perhaps particularly – when it appears to engage with local cultural practices, as discussed around crofting earlier in this chapter.

This has been an extended discussion of the local politics of Gaelic in Sleat, given that the principal focus of this thesis is community action around land. However, insofar as Gaelic is further linked in to interpretations of change in the local community, and who wins and loses from it, it is linked in to the web of power relations around community action.

One further episode involving Gaelic and community action bears recounting for its value in illustrating several themes about power and community in Sleat that will be picked up later in the thesis. In 2006 a proposal was made to the Highland Council by a group of parents in Sleat, supported by the Comunn na Gaidhlig and other public Gaelic-promotion bodies, to make the primary school an entirely Gaelic-medium school. Up to that point it had been an English-medium school, with a Gaelic-medium class based within the school. However, pupil numbers in the Gaelic unit had begun to exceed those in the English unit. The proposed change would mean that, as the consultation document issued to Sleat residents put it (Highland Council 2006: Appendix 1):

In a dedicated Gaelic School, Gaelic is the means by which all staff and pupils interact: the culture of the school is Gaelic and all staff and pupils communicate through the Gaelic language at all times and in all situations.

The nearest English-medium primary school would have been in Broadford.

This proposal provoked intense local debate. A Highland Council report on the consultation about this proposal records written submissions from 215 local residents, almost one third of the adult population, in addition to petitions supporting both sides
and well-attended public meetings organised as part of the consultation (Highland Council 2006). The written submissions were almost exactly split on the issue: 109 opposed the proposal and 106 supported it. Issues raised included identity and inclusion/exclusion in the community, and the nature of the school's attachment to the community and implications of this; as well as the benefits or otherwise of bilingualism, the practical difficulties of sending primary school children to Broadford (for English-medium education) and the primacy of parental choice. In the end, a compromise solution – Gaelic-medium with provision for English-medium – was reached. It is still a controversial issue to raise.

**Community and public policy at local level**

One final observation, made by only a few people but significant for the themes of this thesis, was that the term “community” had itself become important in local relations with external institutions:

> we're now in a position where whatever's happening's going to have community in the title because that's just where we are. You know? It's become the buzzword and the, you know, the mantra, of every politician, can't get the word community out of his mouth fast enough.

('Tain', Sleat crofter)

Sometimes, as in this quotation above, such an observation was linked to scepticism about the use of “community”, including specifically in relation to CLIs (see further discussion below). At other times, people actively used the term as a tool in attempts to access external resources. One member of a moorings association recounted how the name had been changed from “South Skye Mooring Developments Association” to “South Sleat Community Moorings Association”. This was partly to aid in access funding for a major project (renovation of a pier) that the association hoped to undertake.

Such a use of the term “community” is certainly an attempt to strategically engage with the third face of power in the form of cultural representations. It might also be seen as a cynical use of the term, but the two are not necessarily the same. The member of the Moorings Association quoted above was keen to emphasise that the pier in question is a key piece of infrastructure in the local yachting tourism economy, providing employment, and for local fishermen, as well as for local recreational users. It serves a
role both for the community of interest around the Moorings – whose association is accountable to its members – and to the wider community of place in Sleat. Thus they felt that describing it as a community asset was perfectly legitimate, on the one hand; but on the other hand, they were well aware that accessing external support required a certain amount of strategy and political game-playing, and an appropriate name for the organisation and project was part of this. The organisation could be named and described in a number of ways: currently, the “community” angle is felt to be the most useful to project to the outside world. (In another political context, say the “enterprise” orientated 1980s, the more commercial “Mooring Developments” name might have been the more useful choice.)

d. The good or strong community – meanings and debates

This section presents data on Sleat residents' ideals of community as revealed in interviews and conversations. Statements of valued characteristics of good or “strong” communities arose without prompting in more general discussions of community, sometimes to point out what was lacking in actual communities, but just as commonly to highlight positive developments in the area. The statements are presented grouped into three themes: demographic balance; neighbourliness; convivial social interaction. The section closes with an account of sceptical viewpoints, which themselves fall into two main groups: those that feel that the present-day communities of Sleat are weak compared with those of the past; and those that are sceptical of the very concept of “community” as commonly employed today.

Demographic balance

The changing demography of Sleat was a common theme in interviews and conversations. A mixture of ages, and in particular a large number of younger people, were associated positively with “community” by many people. There were strong reactions against the perceived ageing of communities in the Highlands, and in Sleat in particular. This was often associated with the long-term decline in population in the peninsula up until the early 1970s. Conversely, many people were very positive about the recent increase in the numbers of young people in Sleat: new babies were referred to with pride, and people sometimes knew the exact number of children in their village.

That's when the population was in decline, about that time [1950s] you know, I mean there was old people like my granny next door, and aunties and things like...
this, but there was half – not even half, the number of houses that are there now, you know?
('James', Sleat resident)

There's life in the place, without young people you don't have a community.
('Finlay', Camuscross resident)

'Lindsay': there's nice examples I think, of people, as 'John' says, coming back and bringing up their families. And you need that, because if everybody's just approaching retiring age...
'John': ...then you have a community full of muppets!
(Camuscross residents)

My estimate was that all of these speakers were themselves over 50 years old; certainly all had lived in Sleat for decades. Three of them have extended family connections to the area; evidence that in-migration may be welcomed by “locals” if it contributes to a more youthful local demographic structure. Retirement in-migration, in contrast, may be treated differently, by some people at least.

**Neighbourliness**

If you do a turn for somebody, it's, they can sometimes see to do a turn for somebody else. Things like that spread, you know (...) there's a word for it in Gaelic, it's *nabhach*, it's neighbourliness. You're nabbie is your neighbour, and *nabhach* is doing things for your neighbour. That's what I would like to see again.
('Finlay', Camuscross resident)

Helping your neighbour, passing on favours (rather than direct exchange) and providing in-kind assistance in small everyday matters, were often mentioned favourably in discussions about community.

Sometimes this involvement with neighbours was contrasted with perceptions of a lack of neighbourliness in urban areas. However, there was also a perception that neighbourly cooperation was in decline in Sleat.

Many people felt that, in the past, neighbourly collaborative working had been significantly promoted and organised by the institutions of crofting agriculture, especially the grazings committees. Therefore, they felt that the decline of active participation in agriculture mean that there was less collaborative working between Sleiteachs today. One person made a specific comparison between a traditional crofting community and a community living around a factory, suggesting that commonality of
working patterns facilitated collaboration in other ways too. In their view, contemporary diversified working patterns and lifestyles were an obstacle to organising communal activities.

One person pointed to the rise of CLIs and other community organisations as arising in part as a response to this decline in local cooperation:

And I think in sort of community projects, whether it's Sleat Community Trust, whether it's Tormore, to me I think there's a need for people to come together in community. (...) I think there's something really to be gained in working together.
('Lindsay', Camuscross resident)

Others were more ambivalent about the possibility of doing this through formal organisations. One resident of Ardvasar noted that, while the Village Hall committee struggled to get people involved, there was nevertheless a strong culture of informal neighbourly help. Another Sleat resident recalled the collapse of a Co-chomunn in the Western Isles, saying that their impression was that this failure was because:

the community tended to work together anyway, and this kind of put a formal stamp on it.
('Lorna', Camuscross resident)

In summary, there appears to be a widespread understanding of “community” as related to working with your neighbours and providing assistance, not on a direct exchange basis, but in the general expectation that similar assistance might be forthcoming for you if you needed it. Such a “culture of neighbourliness” was seen as involving shared economic relations and a knowledge of each others' lives through everyday socialising. For some, promoting this culture was a goal of formal community projects, while for others it was something related but separate.

**Convivial social interaction**

Socialising – everything from stopping to chat in the street, to going to organised social events – was mentioned in discussions of community. Everyday social interaction was seen as an important part of “community”. Those who were felt to be avoiding it might be criticised:

There's those who've come here, and said, [puts on upper class English accent] Oh no I don't want to meet anybody round here. [normal voice again] They
bought a fucking house here though. They don't want to meet anybody. There's those who've been here for 26 years and won't speak to you. ('Iain', Sleat resident)

However, notions of a *gemeinschaft*-like rural community where everybody was continually in conversation with everyone else were belied by modern day patterns of interaction. For some people, work brought them into regular contact with other residents: many people work at the College; some numbers of people at the Clan, or at local hotels. But for others, work was outwith the peninsula, or more solitary. Specifically locality-based collective work – typically associated with the crofting practices mentioned earlier – is a rarity. One resident noted that:

> the community here, I find it an exceptionally friendly community, but I don't necessarily have daily dealings with it (...) I will speak to people as and when I see them, and obviously you go to community events, you try and take part in community things, but I think...(...) if you were someone who needed constant interaction, face to face on a daily basis, that might pose a challenge. ('Murdo', Sleat resident)

'Murdo' is in fact quite well known in Sleat, and visibly present at some social events – he is far from a recluse. Still he notes that his social contact with others is limited. My own life in Sleat was characterised by the opposite, of course: an artificially intensive programme of daily interaction with as many people in as many social spaces as possible. Nevertheless, it still generated some insights. For example, on encountering someone at an event in February 2012 who I had met in summer 2011 at charity cafés, and last seen several months previously in the autumn, she enquired (quite genuinely it seemed) whether I lived permanently on Sleat now. This suggests that people, or some at least, are accustomed to not seeing other residents of the peninsula particularly often.

Then, social interaction is also a way of transmitting “news” about what other local people are doing, which may also be called “gossip”. For some this is interesting, even important: for others an unlooked-for invasion of privacy.

>'Lindsay': there's a lot of disadvantages in a way to living in a small community, privacy's more difficult. (…)  

>'John': [after conversations with one local friend] I'm full of all this – information! (laughs) It's, it's overload – oh did you hear so-and-so this, and so-and-so that, this one's doing that...
'Lindsay': he's married to, he's married a member of a large local family. Put it that way. And they know a lot of what's going on. (...) I have to say, I don't know how people live like that all the time. It's not for me.

(Sleat residents)

In this extract, the extended family is seen as providing the social network and connections along which information flows. However, it does also flow out, to friends and neighbours like 'John' above, so it is important not to overstate the importance of family.

Formal social events provide one type of space in which people still do often gather for convivial socialising. As might be gathered from the overview earlier in this chapter, a wide range of social events are organised in Sleat. These include daytime cafés, quiz nights and various special events – the Tarskavaig hall committee in particular seemed to specialise in organising a calendar of quirky events. – as well as more conventional music and performance events. Participation in these varies, and while much of this is unsurprising – for example, from fieldwork experience, the audience at pop concerts in the EI was generally younger than that for classical concerts organised by SEALL – a wide range of people do participate. Event organisers also noted that one could never predict entirely who would turn up and who would enjoy what kind of entertainment. Nevertheless, it is possible to see a slight bias towards in-migrants in participation. Several remarked on the importance of organised social events to them when they arrived in the peninsula, as a means to get to know people. For those who had grown up locally, already knowing many other residents, such events might not assume the same importance.

Several older people – locally-born, or long-term resident incomers – felt that there was less socialising now than previously. These views are held despite the evidence of regular events organised by many locally-based community groups, and even the speakers' participation in these events. There may be some element of “community nostalgia” here, and it may also reflect the feelings of people moving through different stages of their lives, rather than more general social trends. But equally, these views should be taken seriously. It may be that what seems like a lot of social events today would not have been considered as such 40 years ago. It may also be that the type of socialising has changed, with more organised events now, and less informal going out.
and meeting up. Some people linked this decline in social life to wider social change – particularly the availability of television – as well as change in the local class and ethnic population structure:

Community spirit is less now (..) it's a gradual thing – people go out less, with TV, computers (…) I'm not sure exactly why, hard to put your finger on it. There's a lot of people in Sleat, but not a lot of going out and mixing – it's quieter now, somehow.
('Donald', Sleat resident)

Oh yes, lots of changes. It used to be great (…) there were lots of dances and ceilidhs (…) I came in at the tail end of that, I think, but I got the best of it (…) it was great, I came here and found that I had a social life! It changed with the telly, you see, because we didn't use to have reception (…) and when they changed the licensing laws (…) because dances used to start at 10 or 11, when the pubs closed – but when they moved it back to 12 or 1am, then the dances weren't viable.
('Isobel', Sleat resident)

Against this, by no means everyone expresses gloom about socialising and conviviality in Sleat. Optimism and pride can be found, among the older and locally-connected as well as the new:

There was a dreadful accident the night of our Olympics dance, and the band got caught the other side of it, or the main man in the band, and he couldn't get through (…. but local people brought their own instruments and....) we had the best dance ever! And we just made the band up from members of the community (…) the community is, is strong like that.
('Lorna', CDI activist)

The Olympics referred to above is the Crofting Olympics, an event organised by CDI. It was notable that CDI placed much greater emphasis on organising social events than SCT did. One person commented that some within CDI had felt too much time was spent on these events , but that in their view, they were vital:

Camuscross invented the boat day, they invented the Crofter's Olympics (…) they are the glue that holds the whole thing together.
('Gordon', Sleat resident)

Social events did not have to be labelled as such. One point made was that events that were organised for other purposes also gave people opportunities to meet up and socialise: they could become social events. This included events organised by CLIs. The following quotations illustrate this perspective on the multiple reasons and motivations
there might be for participating in a social space that is ostensibly very much about local power relations and relatively formal decision-making. At other points in their interviews, both speakers talked of how they are careful in their local social interaction, and by no means at the centre of networks of socialising and gossip. Yet, both suggest that convivial social interaction is a key part of life, a human need, in fact. This suggests a relationship between this aspect of community development work, and the concept of strategic life choices and interests discussed earlier in the thesis:

I think the communities that work together on things generally will have a more fun and meaningful place to live. And I don't use the term fun ill-advisedly, in that I genuinely do think you need it to be fun, and I think that you've got to get a lot of fun and enjoyment from where you live, especially in rural communities like this. Because, there isn't a coffee shop or a Waitrose to go and spend time in, you know, you've got to enjoy the fun of living in the community. Or you should!

('Murdo', CDI area resident)

Look at, even at that consultation [CDI community consultation on the Sustainable Community Hub project]. I mean, consultation for the Hub aside, it was a community event where people came together, everybody brought something to eat and drink and, you know, people, sort of, chatted together – it wasn't all about the Hub and the design, there was a lot of other chatting going on. I think for me personally, and I think for other people, you know they like an excuse to do that, so maybe part of it is finding reasons to come together (...) I think that's a real need in people's lives.

('Lindsay', CDI area resident)

Again, it is notable that the CDI events have tended to be structured so as to allow this, with people (especially directors) encouraged to bring food to share. One AGM was followed by music, and actually advertised as “not just another dull AGM”.

In contrast, SCT has tended to treat “business” events, such as AGMs, as just that. The 2011 SCT AGM attended featured a packed agenda, with several speakers giving detailed presentations on different aspects of the work of the Trust, and lasted for over two hours. The assembled community members sat in rows of seats, with no breaks and no refreshments. There were not even many pauses to allow for questions and interventions from the floor. Although people did chat afterwards, they did not stay long, perhaps because it was already after 10pm on a Monday night. In this context, it is notable that in a previous year the SCT AGM had not attracted enough members to be quorate (around 50 people). It had to be re-arranged, with a public appeal for more
people to come. Although this was the first and only time this happened, it was widely and negatively commented on throughout Sleat.

**Scepticism about “community”**

This section of the chapter has presented data about Sleiteachs' positive views of community. However, scepticism about the concept is also to be found. Three main sorts of scepticism are discernible. One is that familiar from the community studies literature, of scepticism about the quality of community now compared to the past. Some quotations on this theme can be found earlier in this chapter, for example on the perceived decline in socialising. Here is another long-term resident, taking a slightly different angle:

> No community now, not like it was 40 years ago. Because the neighbours are trying to beat each other! No-one helps each other. Too much money around now!  
> ('Dougal', Sleat crofter)

Neighbourliness is again invoked as a defining feature of a community, but this time its absence is a charge against the present-day population of Sleat. (In contrast, while 'Finlay' above also suggests neighbourliness has declined, he is more optimistic about recreating it.) There is also the suggestion that change in Sleat has brought a change in class structure and culture that has contributed to this decline in community. The speaker elsewhere laments the decline in the numbers of “natives” living in Sleat, which suggests that they link change in community culture to demographic change. The analytical framework offers a hypothesis as to how such processes might be underpinned by power relations: local social spaces are now inhabited by a greater variety of actors, many with greater individualised economic power than before, and this has changed the terms of interaction, lessening participants' need to build collaborative power relationships. However, there are other perspectives, as will be seen shortly.

Secondly, a (smaller) number of people were directly or indirectly critical of the whole concept of community. They contrasted communitarian emphases on unity, and nostalgia for past community experience, with their experience of conflict and power struggles at local level. It is interesting to compare the following quotation with the preceding one. They are two sharply contrasting views, both made by people with
strong opinions on a topic of which they both have impeccable “local knowledge”. Both speakers were born, brought up and worked as an adult in Sleat, and come from well-established local families. But where 'Dougal' laments the community spirit of the past, 'Iain' says:

Those buggers who tell you everything used to be great and the community were all together, are liars! (…) I know, I was brought up here (…) You helped your neighbours – a bit. You went to the fank – because it was compulsory! Grazings regulations said you had to go. (…) The Land Court was set up to deal with disputes! (…) Never forgive anyone anything, ever! That's how it was! Not some mythical – because it is mythical - airy-fairy idea of community. ('Iain', Sleat crofter)

This person cites the existence and case history of the Land Court as providing external verification of his claim that conflict was a regular feature of local crofting life. Certainly, it seems unlikely that such a body would have endured for over a century, as it has, had there not been work for it to do. The Court deals with disputes between crofters as well as between crofters and landlords. (Indeed, the existence of local level conflicts is not particularly surprising; as earlier set out, this thesis builds on a substantial literature on multifaceted power relations at all geographical levels of human interaction.)

Thirdly, the question of whether to adopt an individualist or a collectivist strategy for empowerment - touched on in the literature review earlier in the thesis - arose in a number of conversations about community in Sleat. Several people stressed individualist as opposed to community-based approaches to change and development. Sometimes this was a matter of personal style: several times people expressed an aversion to “committees”, seeing them as slow and tedious, and a preference for getting on with projects themselves. This might indicate a practical awareness of the kinds of complex power relations that have to be entered into in the kinds of semi-formal social spaces that a “committee” suggests. Such spaces will include a range of different people and perhaps an expectation of collective decision-making; some people may have been expressing a preference for greater personal control over decision-making power. It was not always accompanied by a dismissal of collective approaches, however: simply a reluctance to get personally involved.
For some the contrast went deeper, and the two approaches were seen as in fundamental opposition to each other. Thus one person refused an interview, saying that they had nothing to say to a study on community empowerment because they were never involved in community groups, preferring to do things for themselves and stand or fall by their own efforts. This brief “not an interview” was thus quite revealing of a certain attitude towards collective effort, that associated it with an avoidance of personal responsibility and commitment. Again, the same person quoted above being critical of community nostalgia, was equally dismissive of contemporary community development. He saw community approaches as a kind of tyranny, and questioned community groups' capacity to direct change:

People need to understand that, community cannot, be above the rights of individuals, to look after their own interests, their own family's interests (...) this community, of Sleat, if you look at it historically, there has been no Trust, it's been individuals. (...) People did what they had to do themselves to create a sustainable future for themselves. And that created the diverse community that we have today. (...) I don't believe it works, to make a community plan, and that's what Sleat's going to be like. It's not going to work. ('Iain', Sleat resident)

The two are not necessarily antithetical, however. Still others suggested various ways in which individual and community action might be interlinked, tracing wider changes to the efforts of key individuals. Clearly, and especially at the micro level of one township or village, individual variation and activism can have a significant impact. The quotation from 'Iain' above, while showing strong suspicion of efforts to collectively direct change, nevertheless emphasises the potential beneficial collective impact of aggregated individual efforts at change. This suggests Adam Smith's “invisible hand” of the market applied to community development, and recalls the discussion in Chapter Two of how diffuse power in complex societies offers multiple routes to changes in power relations, often through unintended consequences. Similarly, another person noted the repopulation of a previously declining settlement elsewhere on Skye and felt it was the “unintentional” consequence of “one or two families” deciding they were going to stay and committing to their own future in the place. Their efforts over the years had made the place “very desirable” and had attracted others, such that it was now a “thriving” community, with village hall, children in the school, and a number of small businesses.
Finally, and more explicitly concerned with formal community projects, several people - including some with wider experience of local development projects - noted the need for “charismatic”, “entrepreneurial” people to “push things forward”. Another Sleat activist noted that, at the small community level, one or two key positive people could be enough to “take people with them” ('Eilidh', Camuscross resident) for a successful community project; conversely, one or two key negative people might be able to block a project. These perspectives are perhaps not sceptical of community, so much as of a naïve view of community projects as founded on enthusiasm and little else. Instead they display a detailed understanding of the kinds of power relations and dynamics that are found within community-level social spaces, and in particular the connection between individual use of various social and cultural power mechanisms to promote collaborative action to build power through projects and organisations.

e. Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of contemporary society, economy, infrastructure and land governance in Sleat. It has also explored both practices and meanings of community in Sleat, through observations and interview data. Sleat's mixed demography, coupled to multiple forms and scales of attachments to place, and a range of understandings of actual and potential forms of community life, make for a complex picture.

Social structures influence people's experience of community life: who they interact with, in what social spaces, and what the terms of the interaction are. Patterns of interaction may vary with local family connections, involvement in local institutions (different workplaces, the school, voluntary association), and place of residence. They may also be relevant for participation in the work of CLIs.

Yet, as noted in the methodological discussion earlier, the meaning of structures and behaviour to individual actors is not given automatically, but mediated by interpretation and ideas. Ideas about community are important both in helping people understand the actuality of life in Sleat, setting boundaries around who belongs how to the area, and what kind of powers and behaviour are appropriate to them; and in forming norms of what life in Sleat should be like, and motivating action to achieve such goals. These ideas may therefore be discernible in power relations around CLIs, having an impact on
their activities, structures and participation in them by local residents. The next chapter turns to look directly at CLIs, and at other key local actors in power relations and decision-making over the land of Sleat.
Chapter Six  Land and power in Sleat: key spaces and actors

a. Introduction

This chapter presents observations and participants' views on the principal figures in questions of land and power in Sleat. As the thesis focuses on the community land movement, the chapter will begin with extended profiles of the two community land initiatives. It examines the internal decision-making mechanisms of these actors, their relationships with each other, and local residents' views on them more generally. However, there are other powerful local actors with regard to land and assets. Sleat's CLIs must be understood in context for their significance to be understood. There therefore follows a discussion of the two major private landowners, and two other formal institutions which play a role in the local politics (in the broadest sense) of land: the Community Council, and crofters' common grazing committees.

Finally, to further set these profiles of formal institutions in the context of the full range of local power relations and struggles, the chapter briefly discusses a number of informal and single issue campaigns that arose during the fieldwork period, over both local authority land use planning, and transport. While the latter is not so directly related to land, it is seen by many as key to local economic and social life.

Despite the breadth of material covered in this chapter, this is not an exhaustive study of local political actors. Several groups are omitted: an active health service user group, for example, and a number of other community organisations of a charitable or social nature. And since fieldwork was completed, further temporary campaigns have been initiated: around proposals for a fish farm in Loch Eishort, for example, or regarding the public water supply. As noted in an earlier chapter, despite its small size, Sleat supports a considerable number of community groups, and to profile them all to the required level of depth is beyond the scope of this thesis. For this chapter, groups were selected for analysis based on either their salience to questions around land ownership, or the operation of power in Sleat more generally.
b. Community Land Initiatives

**Basic outlines**

The Sleat Community Trust was established in 2003, and membership is open to any resident of the peninsula. It has offices in a former domestic house in Armadale. It owns a petrol station, shop and post office, and car garage in Armadale next to the offices; it operates the fuel, shop and post office itself, and leases the garage to a locally-resident mechanic. It also owns Tormore forest, a 400 hectare of commercial forest planted on the hillside between Ardvasar and Aird (Bidwells 2007: 2). It currently employs four staff: an administrator, a development worker, a shop/fuel station worker and a community forester. Under the Trust “umbrella” are a number of subsidiary groups.

There are two subsidiary companies: Sleat Community Trading Ltd, which manages the Armadale petrol station and shop; and Sleat Renewables Ltd, which manages Tormore forest. Then there is a Media Group, which produces a newsletter (“An Sleiteach”) among other activities (e.g. website); an Environment Group; and a Tourism Group, which has helped establish the Visit Sleat tourism promotion campaign. (Bryan and Scott 2012: 7-8). The Trust also runs a subsidised taxi scheme in collaboration with a Sleat-based taxi operator, and has in the past investigated housing, transport, and other issues.

Like many CLIs, those in Sleat are structured as companies limited by guarantee without share capital. One implication of this is that residents of their areas are not automatically members, but must apply to join. The Trust currently has “over 500 individual or group members” (SCT website 2014), which is around two-thirds of the adult population of the peninsula. The Trust website states that membership is “open and free”, although members must submit an application form for the approval of the directors. (Typically two or three new members are approved each month at directors’ meetings.) The Articles of Association specify further that members must be over 18, ordinarily resident “in the community” as specified by postcodes, and eligible to vote in local government elections “in a polling district that includes the Community or part of it”, and “support the Objects” of the company (Sleat Community Trust undated). Members are eligible to vote for directors of the Trust, and on other issues internal to the Trust as and when they are put to a vote. Members also receive the newsletter “An Sleiteach”, which is available for sale for £1 to others. Until recently the newsletter was distributed by post to all households in Sleat; however the decision was taken to restrict
this to members only, due to the increasing size of the newsletter and associated costs of printing and postage.

The Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative was founded as the Camuscross Community Initiative in 2007, and incorporated Duisdale in 2008. Membership is open to any resident of the Camuscross or Duisdale area. In 2011 it completed the purchase of the Allt Duisdale reservoir from Scottish Water, a process begun in 2008. It employs no paid staff and owns no premises; it is entirely volunteer-run and committee meetings are held in members’ houses. Its principal activity at present is the development of a “Sustainable Community Hub” shop/café/venue for the local area. Other activities include a “Grow to Eat” campaign promoting allotment gardening and home-made food processing, the holding of social events such as dances and an annual highland games style “Crofter's Olympics”, and exploration of other projects e.g. local footpaths and a bilingual local history trail. The Initiative produces a newsletter, “An Lianag” (the village green), at irregular intervals, which is distributed throughout the CDI area (not just to members), and maintains a website.

CDI had 95 members in 2010, which they say represents 65% of the adult population of the area (Donald Rankin Associates undated). Membership is again free and open to anyone over 18 “who is normally resident” in the postcode areas covering the two settlements. Membership confers democratic rights within the organisation, to nominate or stand as a director and vote, as well as to “have your say on company policy and direction”.

Reasons for joining CLIs varied. Many people joined for the straightforward reason of wanting to support the organisation. One couple who had moved in to the area revealed that they had joined SCT before even arriving in Sleat. There are other reasons for joining. One person who was strongly sceptical of much community land activity was nevertheless a member of SCT, in order to receive the newsletter and “find out what they're up to”. However, in general sceptics were less likely to be members, as one might expect.

Active involvement in the CLIs could be as directors, or, in the case of SCT, as participants in some of the subsidiary companies and working groups. A structure
involving sub-groups and subsidiary companies is used by many CLIs, not just to limit financial liabilities of the central organisation, but also to facilitate the engagement of more local residents. Sub-groups provide a less committing way to participate in the organisation than becoming a director, allow the CLI to draw on specific skills and expertise, and also provide something of a training ground for future directors of the whole organisation.

Not all members were actively involved in CLIs, of course. However, a sizeable proportion were: 85 SCT members had been involved as participants in working groups or directors of the Trust or a subsidiary (Bryan and Scott 2012: 14).

**Community perceptions and participation**
The community survey carried out for the Sleat Community Trust Seven Year Review found just under 80% support for the Trust among its 170 respondents (Bryan 2012: 4), while around 10% were supportive in principle, but criticised particular aspects of the Trust's work or management. Further questions reveal widespread desire for better communication and a more open and inclusive approach to the “wider community” (Bryan 2012: 7-9). Respondents felt progress had been made on various issues of local importance, but that there was still work to be done: and offered many suggestions (see earlier chapter on Sleat community context). In particular, crofting respondents (around one third of the total) wished to see more engagement with crofting issues (Bryan 2012: 10).

Participants in research for this thesis – including those active in the organisation - varied in their views of SCT. In line with Bryan's findings, many were broadly supportive, both of the projects it undertook and of its relationship with the community:

> a good range of people manage to be in there. Well that's the community.
> ('Fiona', Sleat resident)

Scepticism was also present, of course. Some questioned the mix of people involved, and the motivations of those that participated:

> They've got plenty of locals, but no natives. Well, there's one or two natives right enough, but they're probably only in it to line their own pockets.
> ('Dougal', Sleat resident)
Some people suggested that attitudes towards the Trust could be explained by attitudes towards prominent individuals within the Trust. They would rarely name names. However, it is clear from the data that there is no local unanimous opinion about anyone in Sleat. Even an apparently widely-liked activist, described as “practically a saint”, or “the most hard-working person on Sleat's behalf”, also sometimes came in for accusations of egotism or incompetence.

The community survey carried out in 2010 for the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative Township Development Plan was of a 25 person cross-section of the adult population (around 20%). It did not outright ask respondents to rate CDI. Nevertheless, it noted that most people were aware of CDI, and many activities – particularly the social events – were felt valuable. There was also a high degree of favourable interest in the proposed development of a shop and café – the Sustainable Community Hub (see next chapter).

During research for this thesis, various people described CDI as a more “grassroots” or “of the people” organisation than SCT. Reasons given for this included the mix of people actively involved, or the greater emphasis on local social events and facilitating intra-community interaction by CDI. However, the very local nature of understandings of “community” mentioned earlier surfaced in these discussions. Whereas most people had something to say about SCT, people outside of Camuscross or Duisdale sometimes felt unable to give any opinion on CDI. When they did, they would qualify it by saying how their residence outwith the area limited their competence to comment on what was going on “up there”. The only CDI topic that did generate widespread comment was the estimate that their Hub project would require £1.7m to build.

A little insight into the social structure of participation in CLIs is given in Table 6.1. A word of caution about the data: these figures certainly do not include everyone who has participated in CLI activity in Sleat; nor are they drawn from a representative cross-section of the local population. They are simply calculated from what data I obtained: for the most part, the “sample” is the research participants whose characteristics are presented in Chapter Three. (Data was available on a few others, who did not otherwise participate substantially in the research, so they have been included here.). They therefore cannot be used to conduct meaningfully precise statistical tests on whether participation in CLIs is representative of the population in general. Yet, while the
“sample” used for this analysis is nonrandom - undoubtedly skewed towards participants in CLIs, and possibly in other ways too - it nevertheless represents a substantial proportion of Sleat: around 110 people out of a total adult population of 770 (2011 census).

Above caveats very firmly in mind, it does appear CLI participation tended to be by middle-aged to older men who moved to the area as working-age adults, without prior local family connections. However, it is also clear that such a portrait of a “typical” CLI activist masks considerable diversity in practice. There are women; there are people with various sorts of local roots; there are registered crofters. It does seem as if crofters and locally-rooted people make up a higher proportion of CDI activists, as compared with SCT, although both are found in both organisations. And, although again most of the age bands are based on the author's estimate, which is of course a significant weakness of the data, it is at least clear that there are relatively few young people involved. The view that CLIs in general – or SCT in particular – are dominated by “incomers” is perhaps more based on perceptions of who the main personalities are who are associated with them, rather than analysis of everyone who has been involved in a committee or working group at some point. Looking at the directors of SCT alone, the picture is more definitely mostly one of middle-aged male in-migrants – but again not entirely.

What are the processes that produced this pattern of participation? Like most community land initiatives in Scotland, the Sleat Community Trust, and Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative, are structured as companies limited by guarantee. This means that the principal formal mechanism through which they empower residents (company members) is the election of company Directors, who are accountable to company members for their actions. Generally, there are a fixed number of directors, with fixed terms and requirements that directors and office-holders rotate every few years. For example, for SCT, the Articles of Association of the company specify up to nine elected directors, one appointed by Sleat Community Council, and up to three co-opted “so as to ensure a spread of skills and experience within the Board” (SCT undated). Despite this very visible community power over the appointment of directors, in practice there are almost never competitive elections. In Sleat, SCT seems to have had contestation for
director posts in the first few years, but not recently. CDI directors could be elected, but
in practice this doesn't happen.

It seems that this is not because it just so happens that the number of people who stand
for election matches the posts available. Instead it appears that directors stand for
election because existing directors have suggested to them that they do so. Rarely does
anyone stand for election as a director without the blessing of at least some of the
incumbents. And while one might imagine that there could be different groups of CLI
directors each encouraging their preferred candidates to join them, it seems that
sufficient consensus and coordination has prevailed among CLI directors in Sleat that it
has never happened that more people are persuaded to put themselves forward than
places that are available. Indeed, people rarely talk about “standing for election” as a
Director; they tend to talk about simply “going on the Board”. In short, the process is
more one of co-option confirmed by a subsequent show of assent at an AGM, rather
than contested election.

This situation suggests several questions about power. How does this practice fit into
local power relations? Who is empowered and who disempowered? How is it seen
locally – by activists involved, and by others? What do we know about why people do
or do not stand as directors, and what does it tell us? And how are these relationships in
local spaces connected with wider patterns of power: as Mosse writes, do they
“overcome rather than reproduce wider unequal power relations” (Mosse 2007: 32), or
the reverse?

Firstly, Trust activists were quite open about approaching people to become directors.
Indeed, some saw it as good practice – ensuring that the Trust benefits from having the
best people running it:

In fact, I used to, influence that a fair bit, because if I knew we were looking for
three directors, I'd go out and, headhunt people. And I'd make sure that they
filled in a nomination form (...) So there you go I just (laughs) I picked my own
directors! But it was good! I mean I don't mind admitting it, I did influence who
the directors would be in the initial stages, and er, it was good because we had
good strong people with (...) good range of knowledge and experience
('James', SCT activist)
Table 6.1: analysis of available data on participation in Sleat CLIs

Notes:
1. Participation is defined as formal membership of any committee or sub-group of the organisation.
2. Ages are estimated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SCT</th>
<th>CDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community attachments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrived in Sleat...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born or raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retiree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended family...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Sleat now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Sleat in past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None in Sleat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (estimated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crofting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered crofter in household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No registered crofter in household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: fieldwork data and interviews; Sleat Community Trust (2011) “What have we done” p4: “Who has done it all?” list; SCT and CDI websites and newsletters.
This can easily be seen as existing activists exercising power over who participates in the organisation's decision-making spaces. Indeed, it is that, and the speaker acknowledges the ambiguity of this in the context of a democratic structure: “I don't mind admitting it”. Yet, as he goes on to say, it is understandable for the short-term interests of the organisation, and it is in this context that the practice is justified.

It is clear from the range of people that do participate that this practice does not completely close off CLI spaces to any one section of the community. SCT's network of working groups and subsidiary companies provides a framework for people to engage in the organisation without becoming a fully-fledged director – allowing for confidence-building and experimentation on all sides. And the encouragement of people to stand as Directors, while carrying an obvious risk of creating a Directorial clique, has crossed various local divides. Sometimes this may be because the particular skills someone can bring to the organisation are appreciated, regardless of disagreements on other issues (e.g. Gaelic promotion). In other cases, it may be because existing Directors are responding to concerns that a local constituency feels disconnected from the CLI. Thus Sleat Community Trust responded to an independent review which highlighted the lack of crofting engagement with the Trust by inviting the Sleat General Grazings Committee to nominate a representative to the Board. Some directors may even feel that an element of adversarial debate is healthy for the organisation, although others may be more uncomfortable with this (further discussion of consensus in community politics can be found in Chapter Eight).

Another quotation offers a slightly different perspective, that this exercise of power is benign for the director: it builds their self-belief. This argument goes that being a Community Land Initiative director is demanding, unrewarding and intimidating. There is no monetary reward; little kudos in the community; and for some people, the idea of having responsibility for a company, dealing with public officials, funding and so on is very intimidating (i.e. a lack of “power within” in relation to public, visible power). Therefore it is necessary to go out and recruit and encourage suitable people. Such activities are creating a culture of inclusion, breaking down “invisible” barriers which perhaps need active intervention from the more powerful to be broken. From this perspective, what is to be explained is not why so few people have been directors, but why so many have done this. Here is an extended extract from an interview with an
SCT activist expressing this kind of perspective on participation and becoming a director:

They've probably been through now all the most likely suspects in the community (...) All the sort of people who, everyone would recognise as being of some, not standing in the community but, you know, who've had something to do in the community (...) I mean I probably wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been asked to (...) I wouldn't have thought of it, I don't think. 'cos I always think, there's always someone more able to do it than I am! (laughs) (...) And I think a lot of people feel that. And sometimes you know, people need bringing out of themselves a bit, you know, to, just to have a go at something. (...) So I think it's, um, I think it's true there's been a lot of big personalities, involved (....) I mean especially when you get people like [name] on who's, very well known, very well respected, you know, not hugely egotistical man by any means, but still, very able and very, competent, and I think people would feel, oh goodness [name] knows so many people, and I think that's when I felt at such a huge disadvantage when they're talking about councillors and things like that, I was like, haven't got a clue who you're talking about. ('Alison', SCT activist)

There are several points in this extract relevant to the analysis. Firstly, she refers to the benign, empowering aspect of being approached to get involved with the SCT - “I probably wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been asked to”. So here, the “encouragement” of directors contributes towards the inclusion and empowerment of people who are perhaps lacking in “power within” in this field.

However, this need for people to be empowered by existing activists, or “bringing out of themselves to have a go at something”, arises because of the perception that the existing activists are “very able” and “know so many people” - the people who have “had something to do in the community”. In other words, they are people with visible power in the sense of work positions or formal qualifications, who operate beyond the boundaries of the community, as well as having touched many lives within the community. As well as an element of rational comparison of life and work experience, skills and knowledge, there is surely an element of the “invisible”, third face of power in this feeling of powerlessness relative to the “big personalities” who get involved in community politics. She believes that “a lot of people feel” that “there's always someone more able to do it than I am” and so don't even think of getting involved. Another person interviewed, who was also involved with SCT, commented that many people wouldn't feel they had the skills to get involved, “although I would say that anyone can contribute”.

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Perceptions of personal capacity might be based, not so much on lack of power within, as on a feeling that one's powers are already fully engaged elsewhere. This perhaps helps explain the relative lack of people of working age or with young families involved in community politics, despite their strong attachments to the place through work, social ties and bringing up children there. A few such people were active in both CLIs and other community groups, e.g. the Ardvasser Village Hall committee, but they stood out from a wider group of volunteers who were largely retired or at least whose children had left home. The demands of economic and domestic activity simply leave these people with little time and energy to devote to community politics. In this vein, one working mother expressed frustration at rumours that a certain prominent in-migrant who had retired to Sleat was interested in becoming involved in SCT:

What kind of understanding does he have of your average person in Sleat? He doesn't have a clue, not a clue! (...) But he can afford a house site, he can afford a big fancy house, and he's got all the time in the world to get involved in Sleat Community Trust. Your sort of average person, that's from Sleat, that's working 40 hours a week or more, what time do they have to give to a community trust, or to steer a community trust? They're at the whim of rich people who have the disposable time, really. ('Mairi', SCT activist)

These, whether lack of confidence or time, are surely among the “wider unequal power relations” which Mosse writes of (2007: 32). Of course, neither the demands of work and family life, nor the “invisible” power enjoyed by people with formal qualifications, or powerful positions at work, are directly the creation of CLIs. Their existence, shape and development are part of much wider social structures and processes. But encouraging “good strong people” with “good range of knowledge and experience” must surely have contributed to the perception that running SCT is for the “big personalities” who “know so many people”; to reproducing existing patterns of power, at intra-community level.

To what extent can a small community-level organisation do other than this? It is evident that activists feel a responsibility to the organisation (and those acting as company directors are legally obliged to). They may see the purpose of the organisation as to empower the community through its projects, rather than through its internal democratic structures. And, to include people in its management, as well as to deliver
projects, one first has to ensure that the organisation survives. CLIs are not part of the
formal political system, their existence guaranteed in statute. They are companies,
responsible for their own survival: although none has as yet, in principle they can go
bust. As detailed earlier in Chapter Four, they are dependent for this survival on
relationships with a wide range of actors controlling different resources: most notably
funding, but also advice and technical expertise. The active recruitment of people with
time to give, and professional skills, and connections to powerful actors and key spaces
outwith the community, is not surprising in this context. It is not likely that there is any
conscious strategy aiming at making the Trust's decision-making fora “invited” rather
than “open” spaces: rather a focus on including those judged most useful to the
organisation as a social enterprise, which may have this unintended consequence.

There may be many other reasons for non-participation, of course. People give varied
reasons for their decision to “go on the Board” - or not. Sometimes these preferences
certainly had the appearance of empowered choices; sometimes, deeper cultural or
political factors may also be discernible. Attitudes towards the organisation in general,
or specific projects, are sometimes part of the answer:

“Do you feel you have a say in how it's [Tormore Forest] run now?” I ask. “I
don't put myself forward for that. Because I don't believe in it, that's why.”
(extract from fieldwork notes, conversation with 'Dougal', Sleat resident)

Comments from others suggested that participation more broadly was likely to be
restricted to those in favour of the current direction of any organisation:

...if I've not got anything constructive to say, I don't say anything – I don't tell
them (…) they have lots of meetings but I'm not going to go if all I want to do is
say no.
('Edward', Sleat resident)

Some people linked participation in community organisations with “incomers”. Here is
one self-described “white settler” in conversation at the fringes of a CLI organised
meeting:

You get the white settler, them and us, mentality, and I think that's sad. Look
here today, there's only about two crofters here, the rest are all white settlers like
me – that's sad (…) look at Tormore (…) that's good – but again, it's all white
settlers.
(extract from fieldnotes, conversation with 'Alex', Sleat resident)
It is notable that the meeting at which this conversation took place was in fact attended by many people who could trace generations of their family in Sleat, and certainly more than “about two”. Nevertheless, several people suggested that non-participation in community organisation was a feature of Highland culture. Here is one resident talking about whether there is a pattern in who gets involved with Sleat Community Trust, in response to my question:

'Ruaridh': Seems to be the same people that are kind of involved in it all the time. But then again, a lot of people that make the noise after these things are voted never put themselves up for it in the first place (...) You tend to find that probably locals don't, go for that so much, when maybe they start complaining about incomers [...so] yeah there probably is a pattern but, you know, if people want to break the pattern, then go for it.

Interviewer: They should go for it – why do you think they don't?

'Ruaridh': I think it's a very Highland kind of thing isn't it, plenty talking about it but, em, don't actually want to put their heads above the parapet maybe (...) been the same for years, people, having a.... moan about somebody that's in charge or something,'he's on every committee under the sun' - oh right ok, well you go in for it - 'ah no no no I'm not do that!' (laughs) that'll shut [them] up! So that's my kind of opinion on it! (laughs)

('Ruaridh', Sleat resident)

The speaker implies that, while there does seem to be a preponderance of “incomers” rather than “locals” in SCT, and that this does elicit expressions of grievance, these expressions are perhaps less heartfelt than they first appear. They are perhaps more about using prominent local people as scapegoats and targets for offloading discontent, than about genuine grievances; “pub talk” in common parlance. This may be so. But on the other hand, various forms of power inequality may lead to even genuine grievances being aired in “backstage” spaces when people are reluctant to confront power holders in public. Taken together, the last few quotations illustrate a theme of reluctance to publicly oppose CLI activities that is quite strong in the data, and whose social and cultural basis will be explored further in the Discussion chapter.

Others take a slightly different approach to this issue. The speaker in the next extract talks about non-participation and links it to different skills and life experiences between “locals” and those who have “moved in”. However, she presents non-participation more
as a positive choice, to not get pressed into organising; and extends it towards a quiet life in the community more generally.

Some people say “there's not many locals on these committees”, but it's our own fault – because we don't want to do it! I hold my hand up – I don't want to do it. And if people have moved in and have done this sort of thing elsewhere, then let them do it (...) we support things, events if they're on – but organising, no, someone else can do it! (...) we don't [even] go visiting the neighbours in the evening! (...) we're quite happy...

('Betty', Sleat resident)

Note that 'Betty' identifies with “locals” in contrast to incomers. In fact she moved to the area as an adult herself. However, she has been resident for many years and married a locally-born man. Further, her husband is a retired professional: the type of person who is often found on community organisation boards and might be thought to have the skills and confidence to do so in Sleat, if interested. Again, the initial quotation expressing unwillingness to go to a meeting and be critical, is from an in-migrant to Sleat from outwith the Highlands. These quotations also illustrate the difficulty in attempting any kind of simple read-off of attitudes and practices from personal background and identity categories.

**Views from within: the experience of being a director**

My fieldwork included interviews and conversations with a substantial sample of those who have been closely involved in CLIs in Sleat, as directors, staff or active participants in sub-groups. A number of themes emerge from this data: about insider/outsider perspectives of how the Trust works; about reactions from other local residents, negative and positive; and about the delicate local cultural politics and power issues around “putting yourself forward” as a “director”.

In terms of differing perspectives, some activists were frustrated at what they saw as inaccurate and negative opinions on how the Trust works:

I asked him about the Trust. “They do some really cool stuff (...) it's frustrating when people have a pop at it.” He described his annoyance at [listening to people do this], thinking to himself “you're talking such shit, it's not like that at all!”

(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Stuart', SCT activist)

Activists felt that negative attitudes often focussed on money and on communications, perhaps here read also as the opportunity to respond to and influence plans:
[He says that] typical negative attitudes are the suspicion that the directors are “making millions” out of it; and that there is no communications “you never tell us what you're doing, you just go and do it”.
(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Murray', SCT activist)

Some activists developed practices for coping with this kind of criticism. When I asked one whether involvement in community organisations required a “thick skin”, he said:

No, you've just not got to let it get personal [and] to let things fly over you (….) it's fun and games, I love it!
('James', SCT activist)

Others may have found community politics more difficult. Several people who had been Community Councillors during the debate over the use of Gaelic language in the primary school recalled how “unpleasant” their involvement had made their everyday social relations, regardless of their position on the school issue. It seemed to have put some of them off such public involvement.

However, there were those for whom becoming active with the Trust brought benefits also, with one commenting that, having always been known as someone else's partner or parent, it was “quite interesting” to start being known for yourself. The same person spoke of their satisfaction of being involved in positive change, specifically relating to disbursing income from Tormore forest:

with the, the new fund, you know, 'cos you can actually help quite a few, local organisations, relatively easily, with not huge amounts of money but enough to show something really positive for. Like new play equipment and things like that, you know. Which would take a lot of coffee mornings and things to raise the money for!
('Alison', SCT activist)

A related issue is that some people who had moved in to Sleat were quite sensitive to perceptions of “incomers” moving swiftly into positions of power in community organisations. One person gave their relative newness to the area – having lived there less than 10 years – as one factor for not getting involved in the SCT. One SCT activist, someone who had retired to Sleat and become involved in community groups, had a specific objection to the term “director” in connection with CLI participation and the question of local/incomer identity:
I don't like the idea that the local people, or even the people who've lived here 15, 20 years and are earning a living here, see someone coming into the area and trying to “direct” what they're doing.

('Nicole', SCT activist)

**Relations with each other**

Both CLIs in Sleat share some common issues in relation to their geographical position and the type of communities they are serving. They work on different projects which are more complementary than competing in character, on the ground. There was considerable informal contact between them, and some formal contact. For example, CDI news was regularly featured in the SCT newsletter, “An Sleiteach”; a CDI speaker presented their latest plans to the 2011 SCT AGM; and at least one prominent SCT activist attended the first Hub workshop. Moreover, there is one person who is a director of both organisations, as well as a good number of people who are members of both. Furthermore, many activists in the two organisations were keen to emphasise their mutual interest in:

> “working for the good of Sleat”
> ('Finlay', CDI activist),

and their respect for each other's work:

> absolutely wonderful. I'm 100 per cent behind them.
> ('James', SCT activist).

These are undoubtedly signs of common interest and attempts at constructive cooperation. However, many people feel that the two CLIs on Sleat have a slightly uneasy relationship; and other statements and actions by their members and activists do suggest a certain tension between them.

There are two obvious areas that tension might arise out of. Firstly, some of the founders of the Camuscross Community Initiative, forerunner of CDI, had resigned from the Board of Directors of SCT in order to set it up. There is at the very least an implication of dissatisfaction with SCT in this.

Secondly, there is the question of competition for funding. This issue surfaced during my fieldwork, with apparently an initiative from some in SCT to co-ordinate funding bids to avoid competition for the same funds. Some in CDI received this as an attempt
by Trust to gain decision-making power over who could apply for funding for what in Sleat. Others felt that even an equal-footing agreement to co-ordinate applications would unacceptably compromise their autonomy.

Conversely, there was some feeling in SCT that CDI should be working more closely with the Trust – even that there was no need for two organisations in a place as small as Sleat. A conception of Sleat as a whole being “the community” perhaps underlies this and the perception that CDI are competing unreasonably with SCT by submitting separate funding bids. However, there are clearly pragmatic operational reasons for advocating sharing of skills and effort also. Closer collaboration between SCT and other community groups was suggested in the Seven Year Review of SCT (Bryan and Scott 2012: 27), and for the first time since their inception, the two organisations have been meeting regularly since summer 2012. (Of course, activists from both would informally encounter each other often, and did attend each other's events.)

**Relations with other actors in Sleat**

Recently (2014) a Sleat Development Forum has been established, at which both CLIs, both estates, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Community Council and a number of other groups are represented. This was one of the recommendations from the SCT Seven Year Review (Bryan and Scott 2012: 36). This may represent a significant intensifying of relationships between CLIs and other actors in Sleat, which until then have been rather uneven.

Thus, until recently, there has been little formal liaison between SCT and either of the two estates. There would appear to be little informal contact also. Certainly there is no overt conflict. This “peace” may be in part because of the power of the estates, both visibly, over land and employment, and in other ways:

He said that the estates have their agenda and if the community agenda fits with that, then all well and good, but if not – too bad. Do the community trusts temper their actions in any way? Not that he saw, said he couldn't think of any example of them doing that. He felt that both Sleat and Camuscross trusts were keen to have a good working relationship with the estates, partly because they need things to “look smooth for the funding agencies”.

(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Gordon', Sleat resident)
For their part, some associated with the Clan felt that SCT had made little effort to work with the estate. However, the quotation above notwithstanding, there has been at least one episode when SCT has come into conflict with the Clan, or at least one senior Clan employee. In 2011, a perception of conflict of interest between SCT and the Clan over wind turbine developments led to the resignation of the then chair of Sleat Renewables, who was also working in a development role for the Clan at that time. As mentioned earlier, Sleat Renewables (SRL) is the SCT subsidiary company that is pursuing a wind farm project (among other activities). The Clan was developing its own (smaller) wind energy project. While the individual involved felt that this project was “no secret”, and did not represent competition for the SCT project, the interest was not formally declared to SCT: and they were asked to resign. Neither project has proceeded to fruition, although this appears to be due to electricity grid constraints, as discussed in Chapter Four, rather than any local disputes.

In contrast, there seems to be a much closer relationship between FEI and CDI. Iain Noble, as a prominent local character, was well known to many CDI members and activists. As well as this informal contact, it is notable that CDI held a memorial ceilidh for Sir Iain. This was attended by his widow, who played an active role in proceedings; and in general drew a large audience, from residents and also Sabhal Mòr Ostaig students. There are suggestions from the estate that there might be opportunities for landowner and CDI to work together on projects; and speculation from some local residents that FEI might wish at some point to divest itself of loss-making crofting land to a local group.

Neither CLI has worked very much with the College. SCT has sold woodchip to the College for heating for several years; this has been a significant source of income, and learning about the woodfuel business, for the Trust. SCT makes regular use of College facilities for meetings (as do many other local community groups). SCT has also had one senior college member of staff as a director for several years. There has also been overlap between CDI directors and college staff. Nevertheless, the relationship between CDI and the college is sometimes uncertain. As an example of the latter, College managers convened a meeting for other local organisations to brief them that the College had bought land from the Clan and would be pursuing the Kilbeg project; however, CDI were not invited. This was perhaps because they were not thought to
have a stake in it, as it was outwith their membership area. On the other hand, it is clear that other community group representatives at the meeting were surprised not to find them invited to discuss something that is seen as having a major impact on the whole peninsula. Again, this slight lack of communication may be changing with the establishment of the Sleat Development Forum.

Although it has been through a number of incarnations, with different personnel, the Community Council that ran until November 2011 saw close collaboration with the SCT, over for example the holding of a meeting regarding the timber transport lorries out of Tormore. In fact many of the same people were key activists in both. The Chair of the Community Council to its disbandment in November 2011 was also Vice-Chair of the Trust. The Community Council fell into abeyance for a while, but was resurrected in February 2012 with a mixture of returning and new councillors. The connection with the Trust is less close now, but relations appear cordial and cooperative, with the two organisations working together on, for example, the meeting to review the working of the Tormore timber haulage arrangements. There appears to have been little formal collaboration (nor any overt conflict) between the Community Council and CDI. SCT has been in contact with various other community groups, including most notably having its office based in Ardvasar Village Hall for several years; this apart, these contacts have been relatively small scale for the Trust.

There is some evidence that local residents are increasingly seeing the two CLIs as sources of additive power. This was particularly in relation to their skills in fundraising, and liaison with external official bodies, noted earlier (Chapter Four) as important. Some younger residents saw CDI in part as a vehicle through which more youth activities might be organised, and joined for this reason. There were other cases of other local organisations coming to SCT for support with fundraising applications. In one case, the Sleat Heritage group approached SCT to discuss working together on a proposed Sleat Landscape Partnership Scheme: a multi-million pound project of a type that the Heritage Lottery Fund was supporting elsewhere in the Highlands. However, SCT offered fundraising and application advice, but declined to be involved more formally. In general, SCT activists exhibited considerable caution about exceeding the organisation's capacity to manage its own existing projects by adopting others' schemes. As one individual involved put it, the Trust has had to:
make the tough decisions as well (...) sometimes things have to be kicked back (...) we've had approaches from several other groups within the area of late which have projects which they wish the Trust to take on. (...) But we can't do everything, it's just impossible.

('Colin', SCT activist)

This stance might perhaps ease some residents' complaints that SCT aspires to be all-powerful in Sleat (see Chapter Seven discussion of attitudes to community land ownership), while at the same time frustrating those who wish to see it extend its powers.

Finally, it was also suggested in the SCT Seven Year Review that there was a lack of engagement between crofting institutions and SCT. As the data presented above suggest, while there is crofting involvement in SCT, it is less than with CDI; and in any case, it is the involvement of individuals who happen to be crofters, rather than any formal crofting presence. While in general SCT does not operate a system of having Directorships reserved for different sections of the community, given the role of crofting in CLIs elsewhere, and the strong associations between crofting, community and land discussed in the last chapter, this is perhaps notable. Several people from both crofting institutions and SCT explained it as (at least in part) a consequence of the origins of SCT, as a body to receive community benefit payments from a wind farm. As the wind farm was to be on common grazing land, and crofters would thus receive rental payments from the developer for the use of this land, crofters were apparently advised not to stand for the Board of the Trust, to avoid any conflicts of interest, or the perception that they were controlling all the local income flowing from the wind farm. In the event, the wind development did not go ahead; still, something of a divide between crofting and the Trust may have been established. SCT activists have recently attempted to overcome this, making overtures to Sleat General Common Grazings, who appointed a representative as a Director. This person did not stay long on the Board; however, other local crofters have found economic opportunities through the Trust, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

**b. The privately owned estates**

Sleat's current major landowners are the Clan Donald Lands Trust and Fearann Eilean Iarmain. Attitudes towards them varied widely among Sleiteachs. On the one hand,
there was widespread respect for their financial investment in the area and associated job creation; on the other hand, there was also concern for the future of such investment in a worsening economic climate. Some saw land ownership as a burden, and were happy for the existing landowners to shoulder it. Others saw ownership of land as offering opportunities that more people could usefully share in. Some were personally indifferent to the landowners, while generally recognising their importance for others in Sleat; some held strong views on them. Other elements of local opinion included frustration at particular aspects of their land and estate management practice, and at lack of local input; awareness of their local political “presence”; and some principled objection to private, or absentee, land ownership. In the rest of this section I will explore some of the forms which these elements take in my data.

**Roles and activities**

The Clan Donald Lands Trust is quite an important local employer. As the quotations below illustrate, attitudes towards the Clan's economic role typically mixed an appreciation of the investment made in the 1970s, and its contribution to local employment today, with concern about the more recent direction of the estate. The estate was without a permanent manager for most of the year of my fieldwork, and there were widespread rumours of severe financial difficulties within the Clan. (Towards the end of fieldwork, a new manager was appointed and changes began to happen, including some of the feared redundancies.)

You can see the difference between this place and the Macleod estates in the north of Skye. You know, the Americans had the money to plough into here; he's trying to sell the Cuillins to re-roof his castle!

('James', SCT activist)

I think it's been funded reasonably well by the Americans for so long. It's been run appallingly badly. But they might well turn that round.

('Ross', SCT activist)

They are resting on their laurels.

('Martin', Sleat resident)

The Clan plays a limited role in local cultural activity. The staff at the Museum of the Isles play a substantial role in the Sleat Local Historical Society; the restaurant has been used as an occasional music venue. One thing that was almost never referred to was clan culture, and any sense of awkwardness about half of Sleat being in the ownership
of a MacDonald organisation set up explicitly to promote the Clan Donald. (One tenant talked of living in “the iconic lands of the MacDonalds” despite having “not a drop of MacDonald blood in me”, but in a clearly light-hearted way.) In practice, there was no evidence of any MacDonald discrimination in the running of the estate. Further, Sleiteachs do not seem to particularly associate “The Clan” with present-day MacDonald. One of the few residents who commented on this issue suggested that there was a difference of perspectives on the clan system between the expatriate descendants of Highlanders, often resident in North America, who fund the Clan partly as a means of connecting with their MacDonald roots, and the local Highland residents who work for or live with it on the ground:

if you come from a crofting background, or a Highlands and Islands background, you have one perception of clan chiefs; but if you are in America there's a more romantic view, of chiefs holding sway over their people, [of] people we wouldn't necessarily listen to, being listened to!

(‘Alan’, Sleat resident)

FEI does not employ as many people directly as Clan Donald, but it still offers a range of jobs, office-based and outdoor. In contrast, it has played a more prominent role in the culture of Sleat, through its promotion of the Gaelic language. This is most obvious through the role that its founder played in the establishment of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (see next section); but the estate pursued other activities aimed at promoting Gaelic language and, to a lesser extent, what Iain Noble saw as the traditional culture of the area. Many of these took the form of subsidiary companies or business ventures. Thus he rented premises to Gaelic media companies; and developed a successful “Gaelic whiskies” business, relying on “ancient” production techniques, although the distilleries are not in Sleat. He also attempted to resurrect the fishing industry which had once been the mainstay of the IsleOrnsay economy, but with little success.

FEI policy more generally, however, promoted Gaelic. Employees were required to speak or learn Gaelic: one recalled being coached by her native speaker husband prior to going into meetings with Sir Iain. It is often said that housing on the estate, and house sites, was available preferentially to Gaelic-speakers, although some dispute this. What does seem clear, however, is that, in addition to the pull of jobs at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, FEI played a role in attracting Gaelic speakers and activists to Sleat. It became
known outwith Sleat as a place where Gaelic enthusiasts might feel at home, and might want to live.

Land management was another area where the Clan were criticised, particularly on the issue of control of the deer population, from two standpoints: environmental activists, and active crofters. An argument over this issue arose at the SCT AGM in October 2011 when the Environment Group chair said that the Clan wasn't culling enough deer, which led to a heated rebuttal from the Senior Archivist at the Clan Donald Museum of the Isles on behalf of her colleague the Estate Manager. (This was a short sharp exchange, but continued in more amicable tones after the formal meeting had ended.) In other conversations with me, some crofters emphasised the expense of deer fencing (estimated at £12 a metre) as a cost that poor land management by the estate imposed on crofters. Frustration on this issue was felt even by some people otherwise fairly well disposed to the Clan:

She described the Clan as “benign (...) they don't do any harm, but they don't do land management like they used to” (…) I mentioned the argument at the SCT AGM about deer culling (…) “well, they don't do enough culling - it's not been organised like on Iain Noble's estate”.
(extract from field notes, interview with 'Dorothy', Sleat resident)

More generally, the Clan was seen (as the above quotation indicates) as a relatively passive landlord. For some active crofters, this was experienced as an obstacle; they expressed frustration at slow response times to queries, and lack of encouragement for development initiatives. Others seemed to experience it more as “benign” non-interference, and had few complaints.

**Organisation and control**

The Clan's status as a charitable trust, rather than an individual, made a positive difference to several people's perceptions of it. Several people suggested that there would be little need or appetite for reform or community takeover of something that was already in a form of collective or charitable ownership. The word “Trust” appears to be important here, with the phrase “because it's a Trust already” or similar cropping up repeatedly in interviews and conversations:

as for the Clan Donald estate. That's a charitable trust anyway... It's not as if it's an individual landowner, it's a charitable trust.
However, for others, the Clan was first and foremost an absentee landowner:

Now, I'm not saying that the Clan Donald, they're not bad landlords at all, they're quite good landlords. But, there's a difference between having your estate run by a group of American businessmen, and running it yourself.

('Hector', Sleat resident)

In this century, in this day and age, it's appalling, that (...) the everyday decisions on the land management are made by a group of Trustees, none of whom are resident in the UK.

('Iain', Sleat resident)

In fact, some of the Clan Trustees are resident in the UK, including the Chair, Sir Ian MacDonald. However, it does seem that the majority of them are based in North America, or New Zealand.

FEI is almost the mirror image of the Clan in this respect. It has been owned by individuals since its creation, and this aspect of its ownership was criticised by some Sleiteachs. However, these individuals were or are locally resident for much of the time. As discussed in the previous chapter, while by no means generating universal approval of them, their commitment to living locally has had a significantly positive effect on attitudes towards them.

Perceptions of FEI are particularly closely mixed up with perceptions of its creator, the late Sir Iain Noble. He lived in IsleOrnsay, and used his personal wealth and his ownership of the estate to implement his ideas about the culturally-led economic regeneration of the Highlands and Islands. He founded Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in 1973 as a tiny Gaelic college, establishing it in what was literally a “big barn”, and personally provided much of the finance for perhaps the first decade. As has been detailed above, he promoted Gaelic through a range of locally-based businesses, mostly focussed on tourist and media markets. He was outspoken in his championing of Gaelic and his other enterprises, and also achieved national notoriety in the early 2000s when he made a speech describing himself as a “racialist” and attacking English immigration to Skye for threatening Gaelic culture (Cramb 2003). In his later years he suffered from a neurological condition which some feel led to increasing numbers of short-tempered outbursts that fuelled his reputation as “a bit brutal”.

('Ross', SCT activist)
He remains a highly controversial figure. For example, when a memorial event was organised for him, one person commented that “if it was on my doorstep I wouldn't go”. On the other hand, that the memorial was organised (by CDI) and well attended, showed that some people held him in high regard:

He's a man I had great respect for. Because you know, I just thought he had done such a lot for the place, that previous landlords hadn't done.  
('Finlay', CDI activist)

Many people saw him as a complex character, and made nuanced judgements of his record:

I knew Iain Noble (...) and we were really quite good friends but, there were times when I would have him by the throat up against the wall!  
('Lorna', CDI activist)

He [Iain Noble] did a lot of things that were very good – but that he was a “not contradictory.... a complex character – fatally flawed”.  
(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Gordon', Sleat resident)

His supporters tend to focus on two achievements: firstly, his social and economic regenerative impact on Sleat, principally through the College; and secondly, his contribution to promoting the Gaelic language, and through this the cultural worth of “indigenous” Sleat people. In fact, few people in Sleat would deny the importance of the first; but as the following quotations indicate, there is much greater diversity of opinion with regard to the second.

Sir Iain Noble [without him] where would Sleat be? If you look at the census figures from 1971 (...) I can't say with certainty that it was all down to him... but to me it's pretty obvious!  
('Mairi', Sleat resident)

Iain's passion was Gaelic. That was it, you know. And, everybody thought he was being a bit Stalinist about it. But in fact, he recognised that you had to be. And he personally has done more to maintain Gaelic in Sleat [than anyone else]  
('Lorna', Camuscross resident)

He gave the local people a social standing.  
('Fay', Sleat resident)

the whole concept of the Gaelic college down there is brilliant, because it's brought so much to this end of the island. But it's value to Skye, or it's value to Sleat, is not linguistic. It's value to Sleat and Skye is as an employer, is as a
facility. The fact it's teaching Gaelic is almost an irrelevancy. Because most people in Sleat who indigenously speak Gaelic... are (laughs) you know they look down their noses at the people of the College. It's a bit like people who have English as a second language, it's very obvious to those who have English as a first language.

('Murdo', Sleat resident, not Gaelic speaker)

Among his detractors, he was accused of ultimately being a self-interested landowner, whose interest in Gaelic was a hobby that never got in the way of making money:

“Ian Noble, there's a whole story there! He interviewed me and my wife before he would sell us a house.” Was your Gaelic up to it then I asked – he shook his head gently “he didn't care about Gaelic – all he cared about was” and he rubbed thumb and forefinger together. “When you buy a house there you own the house, but he owns the land (...) when you want to sell he wants 50%” and he was “just as hard on the Gaelic speakers”.

(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Jim', former Sleat resident)

Note that when this speaker refers to Iain Noble owning the land, this may be simply a reflection of crofters' status as tenants, and be the same for any landowner in respect of any crofting township.

Running through much of the discussion of the role of private landowners was an undercurrent of insecurity. There is no question that the two large estates are perceived as powerful actors locally; and often as having had a fairly positive impact in recent history. However, local people are also aware that things can change, and that they have little power over the land market and the choice of who might be the future owner of any of the estates, should they come up for sale.

It is possible that my fieldwork took place at an unusually sensitive time in this respect. Firstly, there was the ongoing management vacancy at the Clan Donald Lands Trust, and rumours of impending cutbacks. Then my first research visit to Sleat was in the summer of 2011, just six months after Sir Iain Noble's funeral. At this time there was still uncertainty among Sleat residents as to who the landowner of FEI was. While Lucilla Noble seemed intent on staying on, her brother Chris MacKenzie had remained as factor, and there was speculation that Iain Noble's will had actually vested ownership in trustees of the estate. Over the year, Chris Mackenzie left FEI and Sleat, and it seemed by the following summer that Lucilla had, in the words of one local resident, “taken hold of the reins”. Regardless of the ins and outs of the legal ownership
structure, what this highlighted to some people was the insecurity associated with private ownership.

Lucilla isn't bad as a, as an owner, but she could die in a car crash tomorrow. And be replaced by, who knows who, with who knows what ideas?
('Ross', SCT activist)

This feeling of insecurity may be an aspect of long-term living with private landownership. Is the high profile of it in people's minds, and (more clearly) the notion that you might do something about it, a product of cultural change associated with the community land movement?

c. Other community actors

After a detailed examination of attitudes to the Community Land Initiatives and the major private landowners in Sleat, this chapter now concludes with a section on less prominent local actors. The purpose of this is to set the actors and activities that have been the focus of the thesis in context, so that later analysis can note similarities and differences between power relations around land and community involving CLIs, and other local power relations. Nevertheless, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive account of all local actors and relations, of course. Therefore, the section will focus firstly on the Community Council, as the formal state-integrated political arena for Sleat. Then it will discuss crofting cultural politics at local level, and particularly the role of common grazings committees, as formal collective actors that have some powers over land use. Finally, it will briefly examine the role of informal coalitions in community level politics, with reference to the land use and development planning system, and to transport infrastructure.

Sleat Community Council

Sleat Community Council has had multiple breakdowns and rebirths, one of which occurred during the fieldwork for this study. In the run up to the elections in the autumn of 2011, all of the Community Councillors stood down, and only one other person put their name forward to stand. The Council was therefore dissolved. However, following a name-gathering campaign by one former member, it was reborn in February 2012, and continues to the time of writing.
This kind of hiatus is not a one-off. It has happened more than once over the last 10 years or so. On this occasion, one of the councillors who stood down said that they were “sick of banging our heads against a brick wall” talking to the local authority. Further, there were five Community Councils in Skye that folded in a similar fashion in autumn 2011.

The composition of the Council has varied. The Council that led up to the most recent hiatus had considerable overlap with the directorship of SCT, and the Chair of the Council was Vice-Chair of SCT. Many of those who stood down continued to be active with SCT, lending some weight to the Free Press interpretation of events. However, since the relaunch in January 2012 there has been much less overlap, and on occasions some minor rivalry between the two bodies. The current Council is a mixture of long-term local people and “incomers” with different degrees of connections to locality, involvement in other organisations and years of residence.

The Community Council's remit is to liaise with local government, and that is largely what it confines itself to. It is quite a clear example of an “invited space”, where it is Scottish legislation, and the local authority, that define the terms of participation in the space, through detailing matters such as what issues can go on the agenda, who can be a member, or how councillors are chosen. Most of its work is therefore about the quality of public services and the maintenance of infrastructure, and it doesn't get into development work much. However, there are areas of overlap or contact with the politics of land, and with CLIs.

One is through its formal role in the development planning system. Although it does not have decision-making power over planning issues, it is formally consulted, and also acts to publicise planning applications locally. While generally the Council avoids giving opinions on planned developments or getting involved, this role leads CLIs to seek its support for their planned developments, and may also involve the Council in other power struggles over land and development (as discussed below in the case of a disputed private house build in Ord).

The Sleat Community Council was also involved in SCT's Tormore development as the organiser of the public meetings that discussed the transport of timber by road through
the peninsula. As non-trunk roads are a local authority responsibility, it fell to the Community Council to organise the consultation on the transport of timber on the single track road through Ardvasar. The first meeting happened during the period of overlap between the Council and the SCT Board; but the follow-up meeting the next year happened under the new Council. On both occasions there seems to have been a consensual working relationship between the two organisations around this particular issue.

**Crofting and grazings committees**

The widespread and longstanding association between crofting and land across the Highlands and Islands is prominent in the data from Sleat:

> they [estates] should just give the land to the crofters – better for both of us. ('Calum', Sleat crofter)

> The croft is the crofter's. The croft land is crofter's land. It's not anybody else's land. The landlord may think it's their land but it's not, it's the crofter's land. (slight laugh) It's not the community's land! ('Iain', Sleat crofter)

As the latter quotation illustrates, these perceptions can affect attitudes to community land ownership. This can be the case among non-crofters as well as among crofters. Thus one person recounted canvassing attitudes to community ownership in Camuscross and Duisdale, and finding that, while crofters mostly explained their response by reference to their relationship with the current landowner, non-crofters were generally reluctant to make any response because they felt that, as non-crofters, they did not know enough about the land situation to comment. However, other less respectful attitudes are also found. Typically these are related to public subsidy for crofting, with one participant describing crofting as “the goose that laid the golden egg” before going on to recount stories about public agencies' profligacy towards local crofters.

Conflict between crofters was acknowledged too, with various stories in circulation about conflicts between neighbours over land or livestock – sometimes historical, sometimes “live”. This is a sensitive area, and open discussion of active conflicts definitely a “backstage” activity. A number of participants felt that a superficially cordial relationship between crofters could mask conflict - “the sub-plot” as one man
put it. One went further, and suggested that such conflicts in one social context did not necessarily preclude collaboration in others:

the crofters fight amongst each other, but when someone from outside comes they stick together
('Catriona', Sleat crofter).

Note the opposition of “crofter” with “outsider” in this quotation: the term “crofter” is being used to stand for “local”, as opposed to the legal definition of anyone who is the registered tenant of a croft. However, it is the latter definition that determines who is a shareholder in a common grazing, and therefore who has the right to sit on a grazings committee.

Crofting common grazings committees arise in the data in a number of contexts. A few people saw them as vehicles for taking forward development projects, such as wind farms or housing. The Camuscross grazings committee gave permission for land to be resumed from the common grazings for the CDI Hub project. Ferindonald grazings committee has attempted a small wind energy development, but has not succeeded in this; the committee clerk has since tried to develop the scheme as an individual. Others mention them in relation to their work on land management, and – often in the past – in organising the communal activity of a settlement.

As well as these examples of the actions they have taken, their lack of action can be important too. The early stages of the CDI Hub project were marked by CDI waiting to hear for a definite decision from Duisdale common grazings as to whether or not they would give permission for their land to be used for the project. After some months, the decision was that permission would not be given. Attention shifted to potential sites on Camuscross common grazings.

Another issue where inaction is notable is over the decrofting of land for selling it for house sites. Grazings committees have the formal power to object to applications for decrofting, but this is rarely done. The following quotations are illustrative of attitudes, both that the taking of land out of crofting to be sold privately for house sites can create problems for communities; but also of an unwillingness to confront the individuals doing this, even by bodies, like crofting grazings committees, which have a formal power to do this:
one of the other genies that escaped the bottle was the, the right to purchase your
croft. Which was a disaster. I think. Because that led to the hike in housing
prices because, crofter buys his croft, he's got, if he's got a big acreage of croft
he can sell sites for housing, and he will do so! He's got a cash cow. And these
house sites are sold, and sold to people for holiday houses etc. (...) and of
course there are jealousies – somebody's got 50, 100 thousand for a couple of
house sites, somebody else hasn't.
('Sean', Camuscross resident)

There's been, you know, quite a number of people in the village have sold house
sites. And the township [i.e. the grazings committee] get a thing through saying
do you think this would interfere with crofting. But... I would never presume to
condemn my neighbour for selling out, you know what I mean, I don't see that
happening! I don't think that's an effective way of controlling anything because I
don't think that would happen. I don't know what kind of community it would be
if everybody would object to people building, you know what I mean! (laughs).
('Elizabeth', Sleat resident)

Other studies (Logie 2007) indicate that this phenomenon is by no means confined to
Sleat.

It is not always the case that there is no action. There was a case in Druimfearn of a
local grazings committee blocking a proposed multi-house development on croft land
by a crofter (West Highland Free Press 2010). In this case, it may be significant that the
crofter was not locally resident nor with local family connections, although he had
owned property elsewhere on Sleat – someone else described him as a “speculator”.

Grazings committees do also take action beyond the local level, given the opportunity.
Thus the Sleat General, Tarskavaig and Camuscross committees all submitted to the
Commission of Inquiry into Crofting. When the Commission published its findings, aka
the “Shucksmith Report”, Camuscross was one of the few grazings committees in the
Highlands that spoke out publicly (in the form of letters to newspapers) in support of
some of the Shucksmith recommendations. Two members, one of whom is also a key
activist in CDI, launched their own report on “The State of Crofting in Camuscross”
(MacKinnon and Walker 2009). This achieved national publicity (including visits from
MSPs to Camuscross) around the time of the debate on the new Crofting Bill.
Informal coalitions

Not all land and power activism was confined to formal institutions. Sometimes informal coalitions arose in response to particular issues, including some where depth of feeling, and potential significance to activists' lives, appeared on a par with those dealt with more formally. Applications to the local authority for development planning permission were often addressed in this way. While SCT has provided public endorsement of the major development at Kilbeg (see next chapter), CLIs otherwise appear to steer clear of other actors' planning issues. The Community Council plays its formal role in publicising planning applications, and sometimes provides a forum for their discussion – notably in relation to a proposed fish farm (a case that arose after the end of fieldwork). In contrast, two housing development applications drew responses from informal coalitions of residents without any formal prompting. One, in Teangue, saw neighbours co-ordinate objections to a proposed 11 house development, which was later reduced to four houses. Another, in Ord, provoked some intra-community conflict, with two sides positioning themselves as opposing an unsuitable plan and botched building work, versus supporting the “last local family left in Ord”.

Away from land, transport issues were also the subject of a range of initiatives. Some 13% of Sleat households do not have their own car (and 51% have just one: Census data 2011), suggesting that a substantial minority of residents may lack access to their own transport. This may include those too young, old or physically incapacitated to drive, and those who cannot afford it. The bus service is significant for these people, and was the subject of persistent lobbying of the bus companies by a few individuals. SCT did not directly engage in power relations between residents and the bus companies, but instead worked more through additive empowerment, securing local authority funding to subsidise the local taxi service for bona fide use by those in need. (Some felt the criteria for eligibility were not always well understood in the community.) In contrast, a perceived Scottish Government threat to the ferry service to Armadale – a service seen as economically vital to the peninsula - was met with a response from a rather different informal coalition, led by the College and including both private estates, both CLIs, the Community Council and local tourism actors.
d. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the data on the principal actors with regard to powers over land in Sleat. Given the focus of this research on CLIs, it has dwelt on the Sleat Community Trust and Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative: particularly with regard to local participation. But it has also explored the wider web of powers over land at local level, looking at private landowners and a number of other local actors; and at the relationships between all of these. It suggested that legal powers over land, its use as an economic resource, and ideas about security and development, crofting and land, community and politics all contribute to the power relations around community land initiatives at local level.

It notes that, while many people have a fairly positive view of the recent impact of the private landowners on Sleat, one of whom in particular made an effort to live and engage locally, their decision-making spaces are nevertheless visibly closed to the participation of great majority of residents. In contrast, participation in CLI decision-making is formally open to all, and in practice a wide range of people from across the communities of Sleat are involved in the work of CLIs. Nevertheless, there are also people who feel participation is not for them. Sometimes these are people who are supportive of the organisations, but less visible faces of power present barriers to their participation. Among these are “hidden” constraints, such as competing demands on time and energy; and a lack of “power within”, perhaps related to internalising prevailing ideas of who has the skills and experience suitable for a CLI director. For others, non-participation may reflect a fundamental disagreement with the goals or methods of the organisation; or may simply be a choice to avoid what is perceived as an onerous and thankless task! All of these factors – being required to give time for free, publicly stand up and take responsibility in community politics, and work towards certain goals – may be seen as the “terms of engagement” in CLI decision-making spaces.

Many of the themes from this chapter will be further explored in the Discussion chapter later in the thesis. Before then, and moving on from this chapter's focus on participation in decision-making, the following chapter details CLI activities, their “key projects”, and responses to these from the local population.
Chapter Seven  Power and change at local level: key projects

a. Introduction
This chapter introduces in more detail the principal land-based projects underway in the Sleat peninsula at the time of my study. It focusses on those led by CLIs. These are, for SCT: the purchase and operation of the petrol filling station, shop and garage at Armadale; and the purchase and development of Tormore Forest; and for CDI: the purchase of Allt Duisdale reservoir; and the development of a “Sustainable Community Hub” building. The chapter gives an overview of the history of these projects, their current status, and some of the main issues and debates concerning them that have occurred within the respective organisations. Following this, a brief account of the major non-CLI project in Sleat, the Kilbeg village development, is given. As with the discussion of other community actors in Chapter Six, the purpose of this is to enable CLI activities to be seen in context of other significant local projects. Finally, data is presented on attitudes towards a kind of project that has not to date been initiated in Sleat: a large-scale estate purchase by a community group. Much of the material in this chapter will be descriptive, but provides information that is essential to the analysis of local power and community relations.

b. Sleat Community Trust

Armadale filling station
Prior to 2007 the filling station, shop and garage had been run as an integrated business, owned by a local couple since the 1970s. By 2006 it employed four people including the owners. In the course of trying to sell the business and retire, they offered the business to Sleat Community Trust, in the hope of keeping ownership local and giving a long-term employee the chance to lease it. (When the garage first went on the market in 2005, he had not been able to raise the funds to buy it, and had set up independently in “a shed”, a few miles away down a single track road.)

While the filling station had not featured in the Trust's plans to that date, they were interested in the offer. A subsidiary, Sleat Community Trading Ltd was formed; a community ballot was held, with an 85% yes vote on a turnout of “well over half” of Sleat residents (An Sleiteach no. 5); £320,000 was raised from the Big Lottery and
HIE’s Community Land Unit, and the purchase was completed in December 2007 (interviews; Sleat Community Trust “An Sleiteach”: no. 5; Sleat Community Trust 2011).

The Trust offered the garage tenancy to the employee mentioned above, who accepted it and opened in March 2008. He is still the leaseholder, and now employs four people in addition to himself, including an office worker. He lives in Aird, and there is an apprentice who is resident in Ardvasar; the other two mechanics are resident elsewhere in Skye. With support from the Trust, he has recently extended the premises to be able to offer MOTs, the first time this service has been available in Sleat.

The filling station and shop are operated directly by Sleat Community Trading Ltd. The site is near the Armadale ferry terminal, on the main road: anyone arriving on Skye by this route will pass it on their way North to the rest of the island. It is therefore advertised as offering the last petrol for 14 miles (before Broadford); and provides some convenience foods and tourist information services. In 2008 the Ardvasar Post Office closed, and the SCT were able to take over the service and run it from the shop. The contract is for 20 hours per week, but the service is provided for the full 42 hours that the shop is open. The director of Sleat Community Trading emphasised that in this way, SCT was effectively subsidising the Post Office in order to provide a better service to residents (address to SCT AGM October 2011). Most recently, it has been expanded with the addition of a portacabin leftover from a nearby construction project and opportunistically relocated, which has been used for additional gift shop style retail space (Sleat Community Trust website). The shop employs one full-time shop manager, plus some part-time shop assistants who also act as cover for manager absences.

The profitability or not of the shop has caused debate within the Trust. Some hope that the business can be remodelled – perhaps offered to an independent entrepreneur on a leasehold basis similar to the garage – and not require subsidy from elsewhere in the Trust. Others point out that it has broken even, or close to it, most years; and that the purchase was undertaken initially in order to safeguard a service for the community, not to generate income for the Trust. The business is to an extent hampered by the Trust's desire to avoid competing with the other shop in the area, the Ardvasar Food Stores, which is a ten minute walk away. Thus the Trust shop closes for lunch at around the
same time as the Ardvasar shop, and stocks a much more limited range of food, and no newspapers and magazines. During fieldwork it was rumoured that the owner of the Ardvasar shop was himself wishing to retire from it, and offering his business to the Trust. While this might have offered one way of resolving these issues, nothing appears to have come of this.

One further asset that was purchased along with the shop was a bungalow, “Faoilean Cottage”, adjacent to the filling station. Until 2010 it was rented out to the shop manager and his family, but upon their move to a new house in the neighbouring development by Skye and Lochalsh Housing Association, the Cottage was converted to offices for the Trust. Up to this point the Trust had rented a room at the back of Ardvasar Village Hall. Moving into the Cottage gave the Trust greatly expanded facilities - three office rooms, a (small) meeting room and kitchen; greater visibility and more direct community access to Trust staff and directors; and direct power over their own premises. This power also allows them to offer the use of the premises to other local community groups for meetings, e.g. the local SWRI group have used the meeting room.

However, the decision had caused some controversy, with a minority of Trust activists feeling that, while it was only one house, it was “symbolically wrong” to take a property out of the local housing market, given that affordable housing was one of the Trust's original priority issues. Against this were arguments that housing associations had recently made a substantial contribution to alleviating local housing shortages, and that the Trust was in need of proper premises for its own “efficiency and development” (as one of the minority of activists in question put it). In the event, a show-of-hands vote at the 2010 AGM was overwhelmingly in favour of converting the house to offices.

**Tormore Forest**

The purchase of Tormore Forest by Sleat Community Trust is a product of the simultaneous development of the Trust in Sleat, and the National Forest Land Scheme and the asset repositioning strategy within the Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). The National Forest Land Scheme was launched in 2005 and provides a framework for communities to approach the FCS about management and purchase of forests, as well as
providing for the FCS to sell forests to community groups. The Forest Enterprise repositioning strategy, ongoing around the same time, involved a multi-criteria rating of all FCS properties, and the establishment of a rotating fund for the acquisition of new property, paid for out of the sale of low-rated existing property (Forestry Commission for Scotland undated).

Sleat Community Trust interest in Tormore Forest dates back to 2005, when a Forest Advisory Group (FAG) was set up - according to one activist this was following a visit to Sleat from Forestry Commission staff to consult with the community on their plans for Tormore. This was followed by informal discussions between FCS and the FAG about the possibility of purchasing Tormore through the new NFLS. These were perhaps aided by one of the members of the FAG also being a FCS employee, who knew that Tormore Forest was scored very poorly in the repositioning strategy, and was therefore likely to be high on the list of properties to be disposed of.

As discussions progressed, the FAG had hired consultants to produce a feasibility study. This study looked at both community ownership and at partnership with the FCS, without recommending either in particular, and noting a number of challenges with the Forest. However, FAG members were not dissuaded from pursuing full ownership:

> We were already thinking of outright ownership (…) often, a lot of these community woodlands can be about recreational access (…) But, we really wanted to do the whole thing, and, on our Forestry Advisory Group we had people with a lot of forestry experience, at least three of us had been involved in forestry at different, kind of, levels. As well as an ex-trustee of the Clan Donald Lands Trust, so some land people as well. So we were just more competent, and interested in, doing the whole forestry thing, rather than just, maybe working with the forest district to get them to put some footpaths in for us, or bird hides, or something like that. ('Archie', SCT activist)

This quotation suggests a link between the presence of community members already in a relatively empowered position in the sense of forestry skills and knowledge, and a strong degree of “power within” within the group – they were confident in their ability to make a success of ownership. The rather cautious consultants' report was dismissed as “not a very good report” ('Archie') and work on a NFLS application went ahead. At this time, the FAG was disbanded and responsibility for progressing the project was shifted to Sleat Renewables Limited, a subsidiary company of the Trust. Until then SRL
been involved in running a woodchip business - chipping timber bought from the private forest at Brae Ord and selling it to the College, and developing a wind energy scheme for Sleat. Now the company took charge of the Forest purchase also. While there was considerable continuity in people involved, with six of the eight FAG members becoming (or already being) SRL directors, SRL also had the Chair of SCT, and the then manager of Clan Donald Lands Trust, on its board (Sleat Community Trust “An Sleiteach”: nos 18, 19). This was, then, a shift that perhaps brought management of the forest a little closer to the organisational heart of SCT. An alternative interpretation that was offered by one activist was that it gave SRL, who had had little success in establishing a wind farm, a successful project to work on.

While the Trust were preparing for a formal application under the NFLS, activists were surprised and alarmed to see Tormore Forest advertised for sale in the West Highland Free Press. This was variously put down to the FCS being duplicitous, disorganised, or trying to force the pace (SCT interviewees), or to a lack of communication between the Trust and the FCS following the appointment of a new local Forest District Manager (FCS interviewee). Despite this, the Trust were able to get the sale delayed. A further point of tension between SCT and FCS was over who should pay for the upgrading of the road leading to the entrance to the forest, which required work to be passed as strong enough for timber lorries. In the event, FCS paid for the necessary work.

The Trust submitted a full application to the NFLS in 2010, and the application was successful. The final stage was now to raise the £330,000 plus legal fees for the purchase. Fundraising, without the Scottish Land Fund to call on, was felt to have been a major challenge by Trust activists. One recalled:

> at the end of the day it was still touch and go. We met all the criteria as far as the [National Forest Land] Scheme was concerned. But, finding the funding for it was a different thing.

Following an initial award from HIE, they went on to raise the money from a mixture of grants (£142,000), loans (£194,000) and local fundraising (£5,000).6 Title was transferred to SCT in June 2011.

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6 In fact £20,000 was raised, but as only £5,000 was required, the rest was held over for post-purchase development of the Forest.
Since taking ownership the Trust has drawn up a Forest Plan, as forest owners are required to by the Forestry Commission, and begun a five year process of felling and extracting the majority of the wood in the forest. Most of the logs are transported and sold to a sawmill in Fort William. With timber prices relatively high and still rising, the Trust expected to earn over £200,000 in income in its first year of felling. Some are sold locally, cut in “log lengths” suitable for use in domestic woodburners: almost 1000 tonnes have been delivered around Sleat since felling began in 2011 (SCT website News – author's calculation). At around £30 per tonne (not including delivery and VAT; price varied slightly from year to year), the income to the Trust from this is not negligible.

The Trust employs one full-time Community Forester, a Sleat resident and former Forestry Commission employee who was a member of the FAG. The work of felling and transporting the timber is contracted out to operators based outwith Sleat, although in the Highlands. A fencing contract has been awarded to a Sleat resident, and another is contracted to deliver wood for domestic fuel around the peninsula. (The Trust was already engaged in supplying woodchip made from timber bought from the private forest at Brae Ord to the College, and this crofter is also contracted to make these deliveries.)

The Trust also established a “Tormore Community Fund” with surplus income from the Forest, open for applications from community groups in Sleat. This Fund awarded a total of £3739 (SCT website News – author's calculation), generally for the purchase of specific pieces of equipment, to six local groups: Sleat Playgroup, Fas Mor (Gaelic playgroup). Bun Sgoil Sleite parent council (primary school), Garden of Skye (allotments project), Aird Point Common Grazings, and Sleat Community Nursing Fund. The Community Fund committee also refused one application: from the South Skye Community Moorings Association for assistance with legal expenses in a proposed “buyout” of the old Armadale pier. In the public notice of the refusal on the SCT website, it was suggested that money might be available to the Moorings Association for a “marine-based community event”, however. In 2013 the Community Fund was replaced with a “Tormore Enterprise Fund”, with an expanded remit to make grants to local entrepreneurs also. This also made six awards (announced on the SCT website – with no information on amount awarded, however). Three were to community
groups (Fas Mor again, South Skye Camera Club for a primary school project, and Ardvasar Village Hall), and three to businesses or self-employed individuals: Armadale Activities, Stuart Shone (carpenter) and Heather McDermott (jeweller).

The next item that the Trust is dealing with regarding the Forest is the development of woodchipping capacity. This involves both machinery to make chips, and a storage facility to keep the chips dry – a chronic problem given the Skye weather. The storage facility has recently been built, using Sleat crofters as contractors, at a cost of around £50,000 assembled from public and private funders.

There have been two major controversies over the Trust's management of the Forest, relating to transport, and to finance. Regarding transport, the material characteristics of the forest as economic resource, in terms of its location and the bulk and weight of the timber, produce significant constraints on the powers of the would-be exporter. Prior to purchase, the Trust had hoped to moor a mobile pontoon at Tormore House and export the timber from the Forest by sea. However, a more detailed inspection showed the particular characteristics of the site would make the cost of this prohibitive, and also tie timber exports to the mobile pontoon's availability: the pontoon must be booked in advance, but suitable sea conditions for loading timber cannot be. (Building a permanent jetty would be even more expensive of course.) Therefore the decision was taken to transport the timber by road through Sleat.

This meant initially bringing the timber along the single track road running through the village of Ardvasar to join with the main dual track road at Armadale. At the start of the NFLS process this road had been classed as “prohibited” for timber export – hence, in part, the interest in export by sea. However, some way through the process – and after the forest had been officially valued - the FCS (through the local Forest Enterprise District and the new Forest District Manager) paid for the road to be upgraded, apparently in the belief that they would then be able to secure a higher price for the forest. SCT activists recall that they only learned of this upgrading when work started: they then pointed out to FCS staff that NFLS regulations state that a revaluation can only be undertaken where both parties agree to it. Unsurprisingly, SCT declined the option of a revaluation, but after some internal debate, decided to make a voluntary contribution towards the cost of upgrading the road. The road was now at
“consultation” status, meaning that the road could be used with the consent of the local authority (who have responsibility for road maintenance). They in turn consulted the local community council (interview, SCT activist).

Sleat Community Council – chaired by the then vice-chair of the Trust - organised a public meeting in Ardvasar Village Hall. This key meeting took place before the beginning of fieldwork for this thesis: however, it was a matter of weeks before, and memories were fresh in people's minds. The meeting was reportedly very heated. The prospect of, as one SCT activist acknowledged, having “10,000 tonnes of timber taken out past your front door” had aroused considerable alarm in Ardvasar. Many residents of the village were concerned about the danger that the timber lorries would pose to children accustomed to playing out in the road, and possible damage to the road itself and the structural integrity of the buildings in the village. The proprietor of the Ardvasar Hotel was said to be particularly vocal in his opposition to “the lorries”. There was some sympathy for the villagers from elsewhere in Sleat, particularly from people sceptical of the Forest purchase in general. (This was not universal, of course - one resident suggested wryly that some of the people complaining about the lorries were themselves reckless drivers who posed a much greater danger.) For their part, the Trust were concerned to be able to extract timber: without the power to do this, their prized asset would be transformed into a huge liability.

The outcome of this meeting was a negotiated compromise whereby timber transport was to be permitted through the village, but subject to restrictions:

we talked about needing to get this timber out, and what kind of controls the community might like to impose (...) So they came up with the exclusion times for school bus runs, exclusion times for toddler groups, maximum speed limits, maximum number of lorries per day, separation of lorries – you know, down time between them.

('Archie', SCT activist)

The result from this was the Tormore Haulage Accord (see Appendix Three), negotiated between the Trust, the Community Council and Scottish Woodlands (the haulage contractor). This stipulates a 20 mph speed limit; a maximum of six lorries through the village per day; various no-lorry times as mentioned in the quotation above; and the use of specialised “Central Tyre Inflation” lorries, which let their tyres down slightly while going through the village to minimise the impact on the road and risk of subsidence.
Haulage began in September 2011. Since then, the heat seems to have gone out of the issue to an extent. The hauliers have almost entirely observed the stipulations of the Accord despite their financial incentives to speed up the job; although they have also been constrained in their power to speed up by both a shortage of CTI lorries, and quotas imposed by sawmills overwhelmed by the current boom in timber sales (interview, SCT activist). Several people, including some who had been sceptical in the summer, remarked upon the well-ordered presentation of the lorries. It was also suggested that the lorry drivers themselves had contributed to the relative peace, through taking time to chat and be friendly to people in Ardvasar. A second public meeting in Ardvasar, held in spring 2012 around a year after the initial one, was in contrast reported to be calm and rather sparsely attended.

A vote at this meeting even agreed to relaxing some of the restrictions to enable the transport to be finished earlier, leaving a longer quiet period before felling resumed in the autumn. However, this was rejected by the local authority, perhaps because local authority councillors believed that the proposal represented the hauliers trying to act against the wishes of the local community. The data available for this thesis does not make this clear, but there may have been an element of misunderstanding in this rejection of the proposal. It does illustrate who holds power over these decisions, however: the Highland Council, and not Sleat Community Council.

Nevertheless, some still remained uneasy. “I hate these lorries!” remarked one local parent in February 2012, voicing concerns about the road cracking and exclusion times around children's movements not always being observed, whilst acknowledging that they “do try to drive slowly, and the drivers are nice”. In another interview, I was told that some people in Ardvasar felt that the second public meeting was only quiescent because it coincided with several key people being off the island at a family wedding; even that this timing of the meeting was a deliberate tactic by SCT or allies in the Community Council (who formally arranged the meeting). This shows at least a keen awareness of the principles of the second face of power, although my informant felt that it was an extremely unreasonable interpretation of events:

“We weren't even invited [to the wedding], of course we didn't know!”.

('Malcolm', Sleat resident)
The second major debate that erupted in the months following the purchase was around the decision-making over spending the income from timber sales. As noted above, this income was considerable and higher than first expected. Some suggested that, even after making the loan repayments, and paying contractors and all SCT staff salaries, over £100,000 would be left as disposable income.

Matters came to a head at a SCT Board of Directors meeting in November 2011. This was the first meeting following the AGM in October, which had seen the vice-chair become the chair, and a number of new directors elected to the Board. A paper concerning the use of income from the Forest was tabled by the two directors of Sleat Renewables Limited who were also directors of the Trust as a whole. The essence of this paper was that it proposed that all funds from the first year's felling be reinvested in the Forest, for fencing, replanting and other work to ensure that the Forest Plan would be adhered to and in general to look after the asset. The meeting voted to approve this proposal, despite the new Chair expressing reservations and the hope that some of the money might be held back for investment in other community projects. The following day, he resigned from the Board, citing this issue. The same week, the Secretary of the Trust, who had been at the meeting, also resigned, citing the same issue. His resignation in particular, as someone closely associated with the Trust from very early days, was widely commented on throughout Sleat, with most of the comment heard by the author ascribing his departure to a falling out over the money from the Forest.

The problems appear to have arisen partly over the substantive issue of what should be done with the money, and partly over the process within the Trust by which the decision was made. It is alleged that the proposal to reinvest funds in the Forest was tabled at the last minute and effectively pushed through the meeting by the two SRL directors who were keen to establish SRL's power over the Forest income stream. They were old hands in the Trust, goes this argument; they chose the first meeting of the new Board to take advantage of the inexperience of the new Directors. Others argue that the papers were available for people to read in advance, and that a free vote was held. On the substantive issue, there was some support from across the Directors (and outwith the Trust) for the reinvestment of funds in the Forest, with few expecting the Forest to generate substantial income for the community in its first year.
Some in the Trust prefer to see the resignations as resulting, at least in the case of the Secretary, from changes in the Trust and his role. They felt firstly that at some level he had simply “had enough” after seven or eight years more or less full-time involvement. Secondly, they pointed to a shift in the Trust from a new, rapidly-changing and informal organisation, to a more established, formal and businesslike organisation, where change was slower. One suggested that the focus on forestry had to an extent excluded him, a non-forester, from the most dynamic area of the Trust's work. The Secretary himself commented that the Trust was becoming more like a conventional business and less mindful of the community; and that he saw the resigning Chairperson as a counterweight to this. So it is possible also to see this episode as in part a consequence of the development of the organisation.

However, it is clear that the specific and important question of the destination of funds from the Forest was also a key factor in the dispute. In the light of this, it is noteworthy that around six months later the Trust Board approved the establishment of the Tormore Community Fund mentioned above.

c. Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative

*Allt Duisdale Reservoir*

When the Camuscross Community Initiative was founded, activists did not have the purchase of the Allt Duisdale reservoir on their minds. The reservoir became an issue when Scottish Water put it up for sale by auction in January 2008, as surplus to requirements. Local interest was focussed on the reservoir not as a supply of drinking water, but as a potential generator of hydro-electricity.

The marketing of the reservoir provoked a debate over what to do about it among Sleat residents. In particular, there seems to have been discussion between SCT and CCI as to who should purchase it. I have not uncovered all the details of this, but the outcome was that CCI proceeded to attempt to purchase the reservoir.

Scottish Water responded positively to CCI's approaches, and agreed to not only postpone the auction but to take the reservoir off the market for a time to give the
community a chance to purchase it. They also stipulated that the community should go through the Community Right to Buy process, which includes an official valuation of the reservoir, as a means of demonstrating that this public asset had been disposed of properly (interview, CCI activist).

The group found the Land Reform Act process onerous and stressful, and queried the need for much of the bureaucracy around it. However, they noted a number of key features of the process as they experienced it. Firstly, they were aware that they were fortunate in Scottish Water's agreement to taking the reservoir off the market. This was an exercise of “hidden power” in their favour, as it allowed their application to use the Act to be classed as “timeous” i.e. having been made in advance of an asset going on the market, rather than “late” - having been made after the asset went on sale. Late applications are subject to stricter time deadlines and must justify their “lateness” (Macleod et al 2010: 65, 82). It was very likely in Scottish Water's interest as well, of course: having decided to go through the process, there was perhaps little to be gained by making it more difficult for the would-be community buyers.

A more lasting impact of the process was that it triggered the expansion of the group, from the Camuscross Community Initiative to the Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative. This came as a result of the Scottish Government Community Assets Branch case workers suggesting that a Right to Buy application for Camuscross alone would be unsuccessful. They suggested, apparently on the basis of an examination of the map and postcodes, that Camuscross and Duisdale were effectively one community in the eyes of the Act, equally close to the reservoir, and should apply as one community. CCI activists disputed this, saying that in practice there were two communities living side-by-side. Government case workers visited the area, as is their standard practice, but this did not resolve this issue. CCI accepted that they would have to invite Duisdale to join them if they wished to proceed.

CCI activists said that it had “always been the intention” to include Duisdale, but at a time of their choosing, when they felt they had established enough momentum in Camuscross first. While there seems to have been some disgruntlement among Duisdale residents at the manner of their incorporation, they nevertheless voted to join with CCI in a new Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative. While not forgotten, this episode in itself
appears to have been largely overcome, and not to have produced any serious splits in the group.

The LRSA application was successful, and CDI then had to raise funds. The purchase price of the reservoir was just over £6000, relatively low for a community asset. This money was found from “Awards for All”, the small grants section of the Big Lottery Fund, with legal fees of around £1000 paid for by HIE. The final legal details took some months to complete, but CDI gained title to the Allt Duisdale reservoir in October 2010.

Since purchase, work has progressed on planning a micro-hydro development, with engineers developing detailed costings. There are hopes that this can connect with the new project, the Sustainable Community Hub (see below). However, there is as yet no energy generating equipment installed. In part this is because the Hub project has dominated activists' time and effort; in part because of difficulties that CDI have experienced getting funding for the project. The latest information available to the author (from June 2013) was that activists hope that the project can be leased to a third party who is better placed to organise and fund it. While this will mean less income than if CDI operated the development themselves, it shares the risk and workload, and does make it more likely that some income and energy will be generated.

**Sustainable Community Hub**

The origins of this project can be traced back to the closure of the local shop in IsleOrnsay some time in the early 2000s. The details of the story vary slightly from one teller to the other, but there seems to be a broad consensus in Camuscross and Duisdale around these elements: the shop had been a useful but only patchily profitable enterprise; sometime around the early 2000s it was taken over by ambitious new managers who swiftly began to increase profits and project growth; in response Sir Iain Noble increased the rent sharply; and the new managers quit. Since then the building it was in has become a shop selling expensive wool and tweed clothing and accessories to tourists. This transformation was referred to with some bitterness by several local residents. There seem to be clear undertones of class as a cultural factor here – one person almost spat out the words “now it's a *tweed* shop”. The shop has recently been bought by a locally-born young woman, however.
It seems that some local residents have been hoping to reinstate a local shop ever since that date. There was at least one public attempt by an informal group of local residents, made before the establishment of the Camuscross Community Initiative but with some overlap in membership. However, this attempt apparently came to nothing. The issue that stalled it was access to land; in particular, the proponents of the project wanted to build on a site on the Duisdale common grazings, and permission for this was denied by some Duisdale crofters. This conflict was to be repeated in the course of developing plans for the Hub.

The issue went quiet for several years, but was revived when CDI held an Open Day in late 2009 and hired a local ex-HIE consultant, Andrew Prendergast, to undertake a community survey in 2010, as part of drawing up a Township Development Plan to guide their work. In this they sought opinions not only on opening a shop, but also a café, the lack of any shared indoor space to meet other than the pub being another local issue. According to these methods of gauging opinion, support was high (Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative 2010: 5):

60% of interviewees thought there was a need for a new community space, and 88% would support a multi-purpose building incorporating a village shop and café.

The CDI thus made their “Priority 1” for the period 2010-15 (Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative 2010: 6) to:

Build a community hub with shop, café and activity space and include a children’s play area and youth facilities.

The group were successful in attracting Round One funding from the Big Lottery's Growing Community Assets fund to develop their proposal – now known as the “Sustainable Community Hub”, in part because of one Director's inspiration from another community's “Sustainable Hub” elsewhere in Scotland. During the year of fieldwork, they appointed a design team of architects and associated civil engineers, and held three community consultation events that guided the development of plans for the project. I was able to attend two of the consultation events, and the first meeting between CDI directors and the design team.
The meeting between the design team and CDI directors was wide ranging. Of particular relevance to this study was the discussion of planning issues. Some of these centred, as had the Land Reform Act processes previously, around competing local and official geographies of “community”. The potential sites for the Hub were outwith the settlement boundaries on the local plan; a need was identified to show how the sites were linked to the settlements when presenting materials to the planning office. Action in multiple spaces and levels was also discussed (although not in those terms of course): while the local community was clearly identified as key, getting local authority councillors “on side”, and having positive contact with a range of officials in the local authority and other public agencies, was also felt important.

This meeting’s discussion of multiple potential sites for the development highlighted one of the chief issues of the early stages of the process, which was securing land for the Hub to be built on. At this stage the site which directors tended to prefer – it was closest to the settlements of Camuscross and Duisdale – was on the Duisdale common grazings. This land could therefore only be used if the crofters of Duisdale agreed to give it up, and applied for it to be decrofted. However, it appeared that some Duisdale crofters were opposed to giving up any land for the project. It seems that these were people with local family roots and active in crofting agriculture. (On the other hand, one CDI director was also a Duisdale crofter and in favour.)

The sensitivity surrounding negotiations over this piece of land was notable. While it was known that there was opposition from Duisdale crofters, there was no definitive decision to refuse to release land for many months. (The refusal did come eventually.) CDI directors were regularly updated by their intermediary – the Chair of CDI, often with the news that he had spoken again with the Duisdale township clerk and they were still considering the matter. These two, who seemed to be the only official contacts between the two groups (CDI directors and Duisdale crofters), had both grown up locally and would have known each other since childhood. Others stayed out of direct negotiation, as far as I am aware, despite there being overlap of membership of the two groups. People were wary of commenting in detail about it, one winding up a discussion of the issue by whispering “Delicate! Politics!”.
There was some confusion among CDI directors as to the reasons for Duisdale crofters' opposition, and hesitation over how to respond to it. It was remarked that the issue was “clearly very emotive”, but directors were not clear exactly why this was. Some recalled that Duisdale crofters had previously given up land to FEI for a car park, but the estate had subsequently sold the land for housing, presumably for a profit: it was suggested that the crofters felt their goodwill had been taken advantage of, and were wary of this happening again. Others noted that land which was near the main road was useful for various livestock handling operations (because of the same ease of access which made the site an attractive location for the Hub). Some were clear that this was the Duisdale crofters' land and that they were entitled to hold on to it if they wished, while others expressed frustration at the situation. Some were keen to press the issue further, but the majority were anxious above all to avoid the issue becoming a public conflict. This desire to avoid publicity extended to wishing to avoid having to answer questions on the issue that would lead to identifying who it was who was opposed – despite acknowledgement that most local residents would know anyway.

The meeting (between directors and design team) also spent some time on the format of the three community consultations that CDI planned to hold over the year. These consultation events were very well attended. The first one, a presentation and meeting in the morning, followed by drop-in discussion, with maps and photos for all to annotate, was attended by 82 people, mostly from within Camuscross and Duisdale. (This represents a majority of the adult population of the area.) The drop-in session lasted all afternoon, and directors provided a considerable quantity of food for lunch and snacks: all aspects planned in the previous meeting, and designed to encourage maximum community participation. By the time of the third consultation, attendance was perhaps half that of the initial one, but still a fair range of people from the community sat through a three hour meeting on a sunny Saturday afternoon in spring. This meeting, which might perhaps have been a forum for a crucial “do we go ahead” decision, in fact was much more of the form of a report on progress and outline of next steps, with fundraising and business planning consultants presenting possibilities and discussing the way forward with the audience.

Several things stand out about this project. Firstly, its motivation by a desire for security and control over a space, as well as just the space itself. The relationship with the local
landowner is central to this. Currently there is an indoor meeting facility in the area – the Talla Duisdeil, a former church building on the main road in Duisdale. This is used for ceilidhs and meetings by various groups. Refurbishing it might be thought to be an attractive option. However, firstly, it is an old, high-ceilinged building with poor disabled access, and a lack of facilities – in other words, potentially expensive to refurbish. Secondly, it is also owned by the estate, FEI. Without community ownership of the building, any investment made into it by a community group might be lost in the future, should FEI’s current policy to allow public use of the building change. And indeed, it was said by CDI directors that FEI has informed them that the estate hopes to convert the building to holiday accommodation in the medium term. This is understandable from the point of view of estate finances, but appears to rule out any community investment in the building. (It appears that the estate did not wish to sell the building to the community. Conversely, the estate is supportive of the newbuild Hub project.)

Secondly, there was a determination within CDI to make the project development process collective from the start. The directors specified in their initial tender for a design team that the contractor would be expected to incorporate community input into the design throughout the process. The tender was awarded to the firm with what they felt was the best record of doing this. Activists were keen to maximise local support for the Hub, and saw this as best being done through local participation in the process.

When the process began, there was also a concern to make the workshops open to all of Sleat, but also be able to know what CDI area people had said. As the architects were intending to use post-it notes for people to write comments on, participants in the first workshop were given post-its colour-coded depending on residential location: Camuscross and Duisdale; elsewhere in Sleat; elsewhere in Skye; or outwith. They were also invited to put a coloured sticker on a map of the area to show where we lived. Here it is clear that CDI was keen to be able to demonstrate participation and support to its local constituency.

Thirdly, over the course of the process, there was something of a shift in mood among the group as the scale of the undertaking became apparent. The initial plans by the design team, produced in late 2011, were estimated at costing over £2m. This had come
down somewhat by summer 2012, but the cost was still over £1.5m. Work on the project was putting heavy demands on group capacity, not helped by losing the active involvement of two senior members over the time. Risk and responsibility were weighing on activists' minds. However, this was balanced with excitement and the realisation that there was the possibility of making real change:

it's very exciting, what's happening at the moment; bit scary as well, but... I enjoy being involved in this sort of thing.
('Lindsay', CDI activist)

At the time of writing (summer 2014) CDI has announced that the Lottery has awarded just over £1m towards the Hub; funding that a director had previously described as critical to the project's survival. It appears that there is a good chance that the group will now be able to leverage further funding, and progress with the project.

d. CLI action in context: other land-based projects

The projects discussed in the preceding pages of this chapter need to be seen in the light of other development projects in Sleat, if their relative significance, and impact on power relations, is to be understood. In this respect, it is important to realise that CLIs have led on some land-based projects in Sleat, but by no means all. Social housing has been built at various locations by Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, most recently at Armadale on land owned by FEI. Earlier on, it was the combination of access to land, as well as finance, that enabled Sir Iain Noble to establish Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and for the College to later be substantially expanded, again on FEI land. The most recent major land-based project in Sleat again involves the College, this time purchasing land belonging to the Clan: the new village proposed for Kilbeg. The Kilbeg project, and other community actors' positions on it, will be briefly described here.

**The Clan and the College: Kilbeg**

This project can be traced back to the 1990s and a design for a Bhaile Ùr Ostaig (“new village at Ostaig”), championed by the then director of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. That did not attract funding, but a similar project resurfaced in the Clan's development plans around 2010 (when the same individual had moved to work for the Clan). The project included expanding the College, with sports facilities and business units, and to build a new village next to it. It was envisaged that, in various phases over 20 years, there will

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7 one “retiring” after many years of community involvement, another becoming Convenor of the Crofting Commission
eventually be 90 new houses. This would then become possibly the largest single settlement in Sleat. The Clan initiated a masterplanning process and public consultation, but the project appeared to stall with the wider recession. In 2012, it was announced that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig had bought the relevant land at Kilbeg from the Clan, and was pressing ahead with the project. The Scottish Government agreed £6m of “shovel ready” funding for it, and Alex Salmond cut the first sod when he was in Sleat in summer 2013 (whilst also speaking at the CLS annual conference).

Others involved in Highland development have recalled that shortage of housing was always an issue constraining the development of the College, and by extension of Sleat more generally. This project can be seen as the College securing that resource in order to give it the power to expand. Local interpretations have been varied. During fieldwork for this thesis, the project was being led by the Clan. A range of people emphasised financial gain for the cash-strapped Clan as a primary driver of the project. Many also expressed concerns about the integration of the new Kilbeg into the community, economically (“where will all these people work?”) and socially. Some SMO staff worried about a village on the doorstep of the hitherto rather isolated College campus: will new residents dilute the Gaelic-immersion atmosphere of the College? will the newcomers bring crime? More positively, several others also welcomed the development as a bold strategic step for Sleat. From the project's inception under the auspices of the Clan, SCT took the latter, explicitly supportive line, and has continued to do so with the College leading the project.

**e. Community land ownership in general: Sleiteachs' views**

As discussed in earlier chapters, to date, the CLIs of the Sleat peninsula have engaged in small to medium-scale land ownership initiatives only. However, larger-scale community land ownership, as seen in neighbouring Eigg or Knoydart, is discussed, and many people are prepared to give opinions on its possible form, purpose and desirability (or not) in a Sleat context. This section presents data on these views. It outlines various positions in the debate, and analyses whether there are any patterns as to who occupies particular positions. Further analysis of underlying themes in attitudes to community land ownership will be undertaken in the later Discussion chapter.
The case for and against

Some believed in community ownership of land as a matter of principle. Thus for some, community ownership was a matter of social justice:

Property is theft (…) if push came to shove, I don't hold with feudal landlords owning large parts or large estates (…) that kind of land should be owned by the community, there's no doubt in my mind.

('Ross', SCT activist)

For others this might be linked very explicitly to an analysis of the cultural and psychological aspects of power and land, as this discussion in an interview illustrates:

'Sean': it's the undefinable aspects of community ownership, that you can't put on a profit and loss account, that are the ones that, I imagine, would tip the balance in my view. That unless you own your land, you're not going to think too well of it (…) If you own it, you look at it and think, what can I do with this land that I own? (…)

Interviewer: It would change how people felt about their land.

'Sean': Yes, and how they felt about themselves.

Interviewer: About themselves as well?

'Sean': I think so. I think that's part of the, the problem in Scotland, that there is so much landownership, and people, in few hands, and often in foreign hands. Which leaves people with the feeling that we're really not good enough, or clever enough, to own our own land, or decide what to do with it..

('Sean', Sleat resident)

Other people were prepared to consider community ownership, but took a more instrumental view of it. It was seen as a means to an end. Some saw the end as longer-term security:

“Oh in principle it would be, something worth doing. Because the alternative is – in years gone past, I mean up the north end of Skye they had a feller called Herlingga, Dutchman, came in, bought the estate and basically, ran it as his own lairdship sort of thing, you know. 'What I say goes and bugger you lot. You're just peasants who have to live on the land that, that I control.' Same with, Dr Green over on Raasay, you know Raasay House and things like this. Same with Schellenberg over on er, Eigg was it, that he had, you know? These have been great buyouts because these people have now got control of their own, destiny, if you like.”

('James', SCT activist)
Here, two views of community ownership are combined. Firstly, it is presented as a defensive tactic, to counteract the threat of a bad landowner: “the alternative is (…) ‘What I say goes and bugger you lot’”. But secondly, there is an element of the kind of empowerment vision, the “undefinable aspects”, that the previous speaker outlined: “these people have now got control of their own destiny”.

What this latter quotation also illustrates is how people drew lessons from what they observed in neighbouring communities, whether on Skye or elsewhere. Several people noted how Eigg appeared to be successful and an “attractive” place to live now. People also contrasted Eigg with nearby Canna, and some associated recent depopulation of this island with its ownership by the National Trust for Scotland.

For others, the argument for community ownership was based on criticism of existing management practices:

I think the community trust should go further and buy out the Clan Donald Lands Trust, because they're a bigger hindrance to the community (…) I would be an absolute, avid supporter – might even stick my hand in my pocket for that! (…) the neighbouring estate as well! (…) in my opinion I would say both are badly managed.
‘Fiona’, Sleat resident

Sympathy with these arguments may be quite widespread. The Camuscross and Duisdale Township Development Plan reports 60% of those surveyed agreed with the statement that “the community can manage the townships better than the Fearann Eilean Iarmain estate”(CDI 2010: 26). (On the other hand, some 40% disagreed.)

As this extract from the CDI document suggests, the influence of the understanding of community of place as highly localised noted in Chapter Five can be seen in attitudes to community ownership. In Camuscross, and in Tarskavaig also, those research participants who thought community ownership might be achievable saw the first step as most likely being at township level: a buyout, or similar control agreement, of the township's crofting lands.

Others also take an instrumental and pragmatic approach to community land ownership, but tending towards scepticism of its value. Sometimes this can be on practical grounds, often linked to the perceived financial viability of land ownership. In Chapter Three, a
Sleat resident was quoted as attributing a “sea change in community buyouts” away from whole estates in part to estates being loss-making; and because being a landlord brings onerous legal responsibilities - “you've got to follow the rules”. Both these sentiments were echoed by several research participants who were sceptical of community ownership. Often these were crofters. One detailed the various legal and financial responsibilities of a crofting landlord, before concluding:

So there's a good reason why the crofters are just tenants, and not the actual, you know, owners.
('Malcolm', Camuscross resident)

In other words, crofting legislation favours crofters, by sparing them the burden of ownership. Here, the role that private landowners play in land management – and the attendant expenditure – is valued. He added that in questions of community ownership, the potential of the particular asset at stake was also an important factor:

unless it's got some particular use, there's not really much point in it [ownership].
('Malcolm', Camuscross resident).

Others related the risk/burden aspect of land ownership to a lack of necessary capacity within the community, as pithily encapsulated in this comment about Tormore Forest:

Forests are for people who know about forestry, not a bunch of local goons to play with!
('Edward', Sleat resident).

In fact, the Sleat Community Trust Forestry group – as noted previously – contained both a current FCS employee (a conservation forester) and a former Forest District Manager of a west Highland forest district. These were, presumably, the sort of people that the speaker meant by “people who know about forestry”.

Sometimes moral principles were involved in pragmatic, and more sceptical, approaches to the issue. The use of public money by community groups was often viewed negatively:

the problem with “community buy-outs” is that they “couldn't survive without public money”, except “maybe Gigha, and Assynt” - “they” [Assynt] haven't had any “after the initial.”. He went on to say that the issue was that once you become a landowner there are lots of legal expenses to be met. (…) He said that
the crofters in Staffin had looked into it and found that they would be paying £40,000 a year in legal fees if they tried community ownership, so they didn’t.
(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Niall', Sleat resident)

This speaker combines practical concerns – the financial and legal demands of ownership – with disapproval of using public funding to help meet these demands. Several people explained their opposition to the Tormore purchase on these latter grounds, including on one occasion someone supportive of community ownership in other cases.

A different kind of moral principle involved not so much what was being purchased, but by whom: who constituted the appropriate community for land ownership. For some participation in community ownership should be restricted to crofters:

If the crofters could buy out the croft land, and manage it for crofting, solely on that basis, yes, I would say, that's the road we need to go.
('Iain', Sleat crofter)

Here it is the type of asset – crofting land – that is important. Other types of local collective power – such as the Community Council – were seen differently. Others, however, took the opposite view:

you've got to break it down to what's acceptable, and to me, would be acceptable everyone, you can't exclude and say “no no you're not part of it”.
('Fiona', Sleat crofter).

Another line of argument was that ownership was not necessary, even irrelevant. Once again, crofting sometimes seemed to be a factor here. Crofters had extensive powers over land already; ownership might just add burdens, as noted above. Yet more generally, even CLI activists often felt that there were other ways of accessing land for projects which were adequate:

like the wind turbine idea, (...) nobody ever thought we should buy that (...) we just, just accepted that we do it through some kind of lease agreement. So that tends to be, if you're not a crofter, you tend to think of land in terms of, leasing and working with current owners, rather than aggressively, you know, proactively, going to buy it out.
('Archie', SCT activist)

A final argument against community ownership portrayed it as a liability, not for financial or workload reasons, but in terms of local politics. Some expressed a
generalised fear of “fighting” in the community, or the difficulties of making decisions locally. Memories of the conflict over Gaelic-medium education at the school, or over other land and crofting disputes, may be a factor here. Sometimes this “political scepticism” about community ownership was quite specific, linked to individuals' own interests, or their relationship with particular personalities. One crofter commented that:

These community buyouts, I have my reservations. With a landlord, you're dealing with one person; but with a community buyout, you're dealing with 10 people. And they might say 'let's keep him back'...

('Calum', Sleat crofter)

The same person seemed, in contrast, to be quite confident in his ability to get a satisfactory deal from private landlords. This would seem to be an example of a preference for individualistic empowerment, where one actor pursues their goals through existing structures, rather than seeking to change them: in this case the structure being, of course, the crofting system within large-scale private landownership.

**Perceptions of the debate**

People not only had opinions about community ownership; they had opinions about other people's opinions on community ownership. People who were in favour of community ownership explained differing viewpoints in various ways. Many felt that the local presence and investment of recent landowners in Sleat had dampened any desire for community ownership. However, some felt there were more and deeper forces at work. Discussing a previous discussion of community ownership, one CDI activist commented on how this had not been taken forward, but felt that things might have been different:

had we had a landlord who didn't live locally, and hadn't put into the community....

This person recalled a public meeting where there had been some real antipathy to the idea of a community buyout. They suggested that this was partly a survival of the adherence to the clan chief “even when he's not the clan chief.”

(extract from field notes, conversation with 'Eilidh', CDI activist).
Another recounted the story of the “Seven Men of Knoydart” - a land reform protest from the 1940s where returning local war veterans staked a claim to land in Knoydart. He pointed out that the landowner in Knoydart at that time, Lord Brockett, was known to have been a Nazi sympathiser, and also that he had had the protesters imprisoned. But he went on to recall that:

I was talking to an old man in Knoydart who said that Lord Brockett was a 'good man' because he took them back [when the protesters came out of prison]... they'd had jobs before hand, on the estate, and he took them on again and gave them jobs.

('Sean', Sleat resident).

In this story, the fulfilling of the positive, resource-provision role of patronage, allows the landowner to punish his opponents while preserving not only his material wealth but also his cultural position, presenting himself as a “good man”. What is instructive as far as power relations around land in Sleat are concerned, is the way this story was used to argue that pro-landowner feelings may have an element of irrationality to them, and thereby to justify the frustration the storyteller sometimes felt when trying to make the case for community ownership. “Look what we're up against – people who think even Lord Brockett was a good man” is the message being conveyed.

Some opponents of community ownership attributed ulterior motives to its proponents. Simple egotism and self-importance were often suggested. In a variation of this, community ownership was seen as offering individuals a chance to play landowner, or indulge their own personal interests, which they would never have been able to afford out of their own pocket. Personal financial gain was another motive sometimes ascribed to community ownership activists, and something that they commented they frequently were accused of. There seemed to be a feeling that some people harboured designs on crofting land, and resented crofters' powers. In contrast, others linked a desire to see community ownership to misplaced idealism about crofting and a past golden age of community. Advocates of community ownership – particularly those in the more crofting-orientated CDI - were portrayed as romantics wishing to revive something that either had never existed in the first place, or that was lost irretrievably decades ago.

As well as evaluating the moral or practical arguments for and against community ownership, people also commented on what they thought the likelihood was of such a
move happening in Sleat, and gave reasons for their analysis. In general, large-scale community ownership was felt fairly unlikely in the short term. Some people believed this was because most residents took an instrumentalist view of community ownership; and that relations between the communities and the two major landowners were reasonably good, or that the landowners were seen as positive forces in various ways (as discussed in the previous chapter). Even when there was dissatisfaction, this was often felt to be some way short of what would be needed to push people to take on ownership of the land themselves:

[I hear] occasional gripes, 'they'd be better spending their money on X instead of Y'; but that's quite different from suffering from an oppressive landlord. ('Kenneth', Sleat resident).

Others commented on how local politics worked in Sleat and linked this to their analysis of the likelihood of community ownership. Thus one person with some years' experience of community activism noted that:

most townships have prime movers (...) they would push it, if it was going to happen. ('Simon', Sleat crofter).

The list of names of prime movers (redacted from the quotation above) was mostly township common grazings clerks – suggesting that, at least in this person's eyes, crofting played a key role in the local politics of land. There is no easy equation between crofting status and views on community ownership – crofters are to be found among those advancing most of the arguments outlined in this section. However, ideas about crofting certainly do run through many attitudes to community ownership. One person recalled his impression of the division of opinion with regard to potential community buyouts:

people who weren't involved in crofting said 'I don't know enough I'm not prepared to say anything', and people who were involved in crofting said they had no problem, 'not a bad landlord' so why rock the boat? ('Gordon', Sleat resident)

f. Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the principal land-based activities of Sleat's CLIs. It has to a degree focussed on the more visible aspects of power – descriptions of the observable activities of these actors, and public debates over them. However, this data has been
supplemented by accounts of some of the “backstage” discussion of these activities and issues, and by observations of some of the other structures and interactions related to them.

It shows that these projects have been progressing and multiplying; that they are assuming increasing importance in terms of generating additive power for the residents of Sleat; and that their development so far has involved debate in a range of local social spaces, which has facilitated a degree of local participation in decision-making. However, the chapter has also noted that the most significant project to date (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig) and the most significant currently underway (Kilbeg) have been initiated by other landowners.

It has also attempted to give an accurate impression of the range and content of attitudes to community ownership. They deal with the practical and moral underpinnings of any move to community land ownership in the peninsula, including economic, social and political considerations. There is a risk that the account above overemphasises the controversial nature of the issue. Some of the views and arguments outlined above are quite strong, and were sometimes passionately given and defended; such passages often make the best quotations, most clearly illustrating a particular point. Nevertheless, a pragmatic attitude to community ownership is perhaps the most widespread position in Sleat.

At the start of the thesis, the research questions highlighted the issue of power in the activities and decision-making of CLIs, and the relationship of community to this. The last four chapters have presented data – on extra-local power relations, and on community, decision-making and project activity at local level – relevant to the research questions. The thesis now moves to the Discussion chapter. This integrates data and theory more closely, using the framework developed in Chapter Two to analyse the data in greater depth, and suggest a number of themes that arise from this analysis in response to the research questions.
Chapter Eight  Discussion

a. Introduction
At the outset, this thesis was committed to exploring the impact that community land initiatives had on local power relations, paying particular attention to the role of “community” in this. This chapter analyses the data presented over the last four chapters, drawing on the analytical framework developed earlier, and seeks to generate such insights into power and community. As was suggested would be necessary in the Introduction, it first examines the impacts of Sleat's CLIs in terms of additive empowerment, looking at the benefits of the projects detailed in the previous chapter, and how they are distributed. It then explores the power relations in and around the new decision-making spaces that Sleat's CLIs have created, considering a number of issues relevant to the “micro-politics of participation” (Cornwall 2002). Finally, the chapter reflects on the community land movement and “local” power in the wider contexts of Highland development and Scottish politics, and international experience of community and land reform.

b. Assessing additive empowerment
The previous chapter has provided details of the development projects that the CLIs in Sleat have undertaken. These can be analysed in terms of their contribution to the additive empowerment of Sleat residents.

SCT's purchase of the Armadale Filling Station has provided services for Sleiteachs: petrol, a convenience store, and post office counter services. These services are certainly used by Sleiteachs, but they are limited in their impact. The majority of the population run a car, but some people do not or cannot, and for them the petrol pumps are of less importance than the bus service. Affecting more people is the Armadale location of these services, which gives a geographical aspect to the distribution of benefits. As noted in the introduction to Sleat earlier, for residents of northern Sleat, the (cheaper and more extensive) services of Broadford are almost as close as Armadale; whereas for residents of the south, the greater expense of the community-owned petrol is offset by the cost and time of travelling to Broadford for cheaper fuel. Nevertheless, the provision of these services in Armadale are perhaps not particularly strategic life issues for most Sleiteachs. As one put it, they are not “die in the ditch” issues for Sleat.
The Filling Station also offers income-earning opportunities for Sleiteachs, in the form of retail space for local produce, and jobs in the store. While these are limited in scale, they nevertheless expand the outlets for existing local capacity in tourism and retail, and are significant for the individuals involved, some of whom have travelled from outwith Armadale/Ardvasar to take advantage of them. (An effort has been made to offer these opportunities to local residents, rather than employing people from further afield, as some of the other businesses on Armadale pier do.)

Finally, the Filling Station can be a social space in itself, where people interact in the course of going about their daily business, and may contribute to community-building aspects of CLI activity (see below). It is not the only such space – Ardvasar Food Stores provides another, for example. However, there are relatively few in the peninsula, outwith those spaces provided in the dedicated socialising infrastructure of restaurants and pubs. While many people use these latter spaces, they may be offputting for some residents, given terms of participation such as having the necessary budget (especially with regard to eating out), and cultural norms of pub-going that make the space more open for men than for women, and permit behaviour within it – such as drunkenness, or use of strong language – that is less tolerated outwith. In view of the efforts being made elsewhere in the peninsula to reinstate a “community hub”, the value of shops in providing relatively neutral, open-to-all spaces for interaction should not be underestimated.

Larger in scale is Tormore Forest. As detailed in Chapter Seven above, this has generated employment, both in permanent jobs with SCT, and in contracts for Sleat residents. Reaching more people, hundreds of tonnes of wood has been sold and delivered locally for domestic heating. Earlier, in Chapter Four, the cost of heating was mentioned as one of those factors that increase the cost of rural living, and by implication restrict rural lifestyles to those empowered with greater personal income or wealth. The availability of cheap fuel addresses this power inequality, to the extent that the less well-off are able to use wood for heating. With Sleat not being on gas mains, many people use woodburners or open fires to some extent, and the price is very
reasonable⁸. And in the future, greater recreational access is planned, when the intensive felling stage of operations is concluded.

Perhaps the greatest impact this has had is on SCT directly, providing financial security for a few years: the impact of this on the wider community, however, is then contingent on what else SCT does. While this potential impact may take some time to be realised, some of the income from Tormore has been distributed locally through the two Tormore Funds that SCT has established. Discussions around the setting up of the first Fund focussed on enabling groups to buy equipment or run specific projects that would expand their capabilities – to additively empower them, in other words. (The Funds were not intended to cover ordinary running costs or substitute for groups' fundraising for these.) While the awards made have been only a small proportion of the income from Tormore, they have been relatively substantial in the context of small-scale local volunteer-run groups. The refusal of help with a proposed community asset purchase also suggests a focus on more immediate and specific benefits, rather than longer-term strategic initiatives. (It might also suggest a desire to avoid potential local political controversy.) In addition, SCT has covered the running costs of the Sleat Lunch Club – an older people's social organisation – after funding was withdrawn by Highland Council.

Analysing the awards made by these Funds in terms of Woods' community attachments typology suggests a relatively strong "communal" orientation: childcare groups and primary school activities have been the greatest beneficiaries, and support has also been given to healthcare (specifically for equipment to aid home care for less mobile elderly or disabled people), a village hall and a Grazings Committee. The Lunch Club funding fits this profile also. In this selection of projects, one can see benefit to young children, parents (and perhaps grandparents) – all fitting into Woods' categories of "natives" (with long-term family connections) and "investors" (those who have made a substantial commitment to the area by moving there, often with families). The elderly people's projects perhaps appeals to incomer retirees, who might be thought of as somewhere on the spectrum between "investors" and "pilgrims", the latter group being characterised more by their attachment to the landscape and sensuous qualities of place (peace, beauty) as by social connections. Clearly, they may also benefit older "natives"⁸.

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⁸ Certainly cheaper than the author was paying in Inverness over the same period, with several large-volume producers to choose from.
and “investors” (and there are several who moved to Sleat as young families in the 1970s and are still there now). This is compatible with some local perceptions of SCT as dominated by “incomers”, in the sense of “investors”; but it suggests that they are not being empowered exclusively of other groups. It is notable also that both Gaelic and English childcare projects have been supported.

Some potential conflicts of interest are perhaps inevitable given the multiplex relationships that characterised small communities. One of the local entrepreneurs awarded funds is the daughter of the current SCT Chair, and the allotments project is run by the former SCT secretary. However, the Moorings Association whose application was rejected numbers the husband of an SCT director among its directors. While both these decisions were made after the end of fieldwork for this thesis, and so data on local perceptions of them are not available, it would appear that there is no systematic prioritising of funds for SCT activists' families.

Finally, SCT continues to run its subsidised taxi service, preferring this to other transport projects such as running its own minibus. Clearly offering great expansion of powers to those without a car or otherwise unable to drive, this is a significant sum of money locally, most recently £15,000 for 2013-14 (SCT website) directed at addressing another of the key rural cost-of-living issues discussed in Chapter Four earlier. While less high-profile than many of SCT's activities, its impact should not be neglected.

The Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative has not yet generated substantial income, employment or energy supply from the reservoir it owns; this project is still in development. Likewise, the Sustainable Community Hub project is progressing, but the Hub has not yet been built or put into operation. The community garden/allotments project produced food for a while, and provided some with an opportunity to participate in this – but suffered from under-demand, suggesting that these powers were not seen as particularly significant by most local people. What CDI has successfully achieved is a steady stream of locally-based social events – dances, meals, and the Crofting Olympics. These created new social spaces for people to interact and socialise, as well as opportunities for more intensive interaction for those who volunteered to organise them. As noted earlier, the more ostensibly “business” meetings associated with developing the groups' projects – community consultations, AGMs – were also
organised so as to facilitate social interaction: they were incorporated into the group's “community building” mission. This was a conscious strategy by activists, and some local residents felt that this was significant in itself. Another cited the voluntary effort that was put into the Crofting Olympics as evidence of CDI's success in giving new impetus to the idea of community, and translating that idea into practical collaboration; in effect, building collective power through changing the local culture of community.

It was noted earlier that both CLIs are beginning to be seen within the population of Sleat as organisations possessing power themselves, particularly in relation to project management, fundraising and liaison with external bodies. While not all within the CLIs feel they are ready to assume the central role in local development that some outwith them might wish, this suggests that the development of community organisations itself contributes to the powers at the disposal of residents.

Nevertheless, neither of the Sleat CLIs has yet achieved the scale of change in power that some of the larger-scale buyouts appear to have. The most significant locally-driven change in Sleat in recent decades has surely been the development of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, as detailed earlier. In terms of visible impacts on jobs and wealth creation in the area, and in relation to local culture – despite this not being entirely straightforward – it has significantly changed the opportunities open to local residents. Yet, while some local residents have been major drivers of this, like any college, SMO is not an internal democracy, nor is it controlled by the local community. And despite ten years of SCT, and some community purchases, the two landed estates still control much of the rest of the physical assets of Sleat. For some local activists, this is a source of frustration:

I don't want to detract from what they're doing in Camuscross, and Duisdale (...) but (...) a lot of talk, for many years, er, and not an awful lot has happened. But, that's not to say that it won't happen in the future (...) the Sleat Community Trust, (sigh): up to now it's just, ticked over (...) didn't achieve anything very great - except the delivery of service, you know, I'm not belittling what it has done, but it has not generated, funds.

('Hector', SCT activist)

In this quotation, frustration is balanced by a recognition, firstly that some visible additive empowerment of residents has been achieved, through “delivery of service”; and secondly that the organisations are developing, and more change may “happen in
the future”. Several other SCT activists suggested that, in fact, they felt that the organisation's achievements were very reasonable, given an awareness of the time needed for an organisation to learn and grow: and not all would share this activist's ambitions for community ownership in any case. For their part, CDI activists were certainly ambitious for their community, yet valued the community-building socialising they had established also. Discussing the intricacies of the process of trying to generate enough collective power and ambition to develop major projects locally, one commented that they:

had to accept that if all they could do was to organise dances, then... [shrugged i.e. 'so be it']
(excerpt from fieldnotes, interview with 'Eilidh', CDI activist).

c. Local decision-making spaces: terms of engagement

The CLIs in Sleat may not yet have achieved the impacts that all their adherents would like to see. Yet in addition to the list of additive empowerment effects discussed above, they have also created new organisations dedicated to local control over development: new local decision-making spaces. As discussed in Chapter Six, on the one hand, a wide range of people do participate in these spaces; on the other, participation is not universal, and appears to pose problems for some. Formal procedures – particularly elections – do not operate as they might appear to “on paper”.

In line with the framework outlined in Chapter Two, the faces of power approach is used to analyse the terms of engagement in these spaces. The analysis explores their formal and visible rules; more hidden factors influencing participation in them; and the third face of power, as evident in ideas about community, politics and community leadership bound up with them.

Differing terms of access to and ideas about land are also important for structuring engagement in community land initiative spaces, and these will be the focus of a subsequent section that also explores the multi-level connections built around the community land movement and ideas of Highland development.
Visible power: new spaces
Unlike those of other landowners, CLI decision-making spaces are formally open to all. The Nobles were praised for their personal openness to discussion with local people; some of the Trustees of the Clan were singled out for local engagement. Yet there is clear difference between informal consultation, in the gift of the landowner, when final decisions are made in closed spaces; and decision-making in spaces created locally, where local access is formally guaranteed in the constitution of an organisation. Formal procedures are tools that can be used if people can overcome other constraints, or are desperate enough to risk the consequences of ignoring them. Outwith Sleat, the Abriachan Forest Trust is a case in point. After years of unopposed nominations to the Board, an election was fought when controversy arose in relation to the Land Reform Act. In that case somebody stood for election to the Board as a “challenger”. In the event, the challenger was not elected; furthermore, it seems that the experience was traumatic for many (further discussion of this aspect of community politics to follow below), and has not been repeated. Nevertheless, the formal tools that were there had been used.

Hidden power: power and responsibility

If the wider community buys the land, all you've done is changed one landlord for another. Hasn't actually changed anything! For a crofter. And has only brought, sometimes, the issues that were at a distance, because your landlord was far away and you could, well they were just far away, to the doorstep. ('Iain', Sleat crofter).

'Angus': [tensions over development projects are] better dealt with it seems to me by the community having to sort this out: so what are we going to do then? How do we reconcile all of this? Quite challenging.

Interviewer: I think having the, local responsibility for it, can accentuate it, or it presents the challenge?

'Angus': it's both, but it seems to me that it's still infinitely better, than blaming somebody else because you're completely out of control. You know I mean convenient, but it's not good! For too long, we've been able to blame other people, say, oh if only we had a decent laird. Well, that's not a position to be in, really. It may be more difficult to deal, and reconcile with your neighbours, so what are we going to do then? But at least you're deciding.
(extract from interview with 'Angus', CLI movement activist)
Power is said to be accompanied by responsibility (Lukes 2005: 57-8, 66-67). While the philosophical basis of the link between power and responsibility is clear, how is responsibility to be understood sociologically? One possible interpretation is that responsibility refers to the powers that others can exercise over you by virtue of a position of power that you occupy. This therefore requires some mechanism by which others can exercise that power. It has been shown in the previous chapter that some people are wary of the financial and legal responsibilities associated with land ownership: they see ownership as leaving them open to the exercise of power by others (financial institutions, contractors and creditors, neighbours and potential plaintiffs). There appeared also to be some caution with regard to assuming the local social responsibility that might go with participating in a local decision-making space such as those created by CLIs.

If it is accepted that the interests of the individual members of any community of place will sometimes differ, then it can be seen that there is the potential for local decision-making processes to throw up decisions that will inevitably disadvantage somebody in the community, to some extent. And, in any community characterised by multiplex relationships (as discussed in Chapter Two), as well as formal mechanisms of accountability, those disadvantaged may be able to operationalise the concept of responsibility in other ways. At its simplest, this can involve ostracising those to be held responsible. Others (Parman 2005, Crow and Allan 1994: 10-11, Shucksmith et al 1996: 230) have suggested that, in the context of community social structures, gossip functions as a form of social control, and may affect individuals' willingness to engage with controversial issues. To the extent that someone is integrated into local socialising networks, and depends on others within them for their social relationships, they are subject to their power.

As has been shown in Chapter Six, to become a CLI director is to expose oneself to this – even to aspersions about one's possible financial or egotistical motivations for engaging in the ostensibly altruistic field of community activism, and to scapegoating talk. Such pressures are alluded to in another recent study of CLIs (McMorran et al 2013: 24). Some felt that such calculations of tradeoffs between the benefits of greater power versus the risks of taking responsibility played a major part in forestalling greater interest in collective land ownership from crofters in Sleat:
crofters are, just a little bit reticent to, to get together [to organise a buyout], because, because ultimately they may fall out with their neighbours, and it's far better to just rub along with your neighbours, and hate the landlord, than it is to get rid of the landlord and hate your nextdoor neighbour.

('Archie', Sleat crofter)

In a classic community study, Frankenberg suggests that such risks are highest for people most dependent on local social networks – most likely, those with family history in the area, who have lived there most of their lives – and that this helps explain the preponderance of “incomers” in positions of local responsibility (Frankenberg 1957). However, as the data on the social mix of CLI participants in Sleat suggests, this does not mean that “locals” will avoid any involvement in community organisations. For a start, at this micro level, variation in personalities and interpersonal social relations will matter. Some people may be more willing to live with criticism or not being spoken to than others, regarding this as “fun and games”; they may be more or less dependent for their self-esteem on socialising and the goodwill of others. Also, the degree of potential controversy varies from issue to issue: people may be involved with an organisation, but take care to stay out of those areas of its work that might bring them into conflict with their neighbours or relatives.

Secondly, some “incomers” may still want to have a locally-based social life, and find involvement in community projects can constrain as well as facilitate this:

I'm sure they talk about it [CLI politics] (...) but they wouldn't talk to me about it in the shop. I mean I've never been in the shop or anywhere, petrol station or anything, and had anybody from what I regard as sort of local community come and mention to me what's happening, or “I've heard such and such”, so I think that there's a sense in which you just get left out of the loop really.

('Nicole', SCT activist)

Again, it was shown in Chapter Five that socialising, and flows of information – or “gossip” - are not restricted to local family networks, but may include neighbours and in-migrants. Here Woods' typology is helpful in going beyond the simplistic “incomer”/”local” dichotomy. It may be not only “natives” who risk important social relationships with involvement in potentially controversial initiatives, but some “investors” too.
Finally, it is worth noting that there may be more at stake than social relations in themselves. Those who wish to redress disadvantage they have suffered may have control over other resources – they may be members of a grazings committee, for example - and be in a position to alter their decision-making accordingly. The anticipation of such 'tit-for-tat' reactions is seen, for example, in the quotation given in Chapter Four about the risks of using the Land Reform Act against a local landowner, in terms very similar to Cohen (1985: 28-9), who suggests that such interpersonal conflict within a locality can lead to considerable difficulties and complications in the conduct of everyday life.

These factors increase the attractiveness of having ultimate decision-making power vested in a non-local body. In the opening quotation of this section, the speaker hints at the benefits of having the landlord “far away”; others in Sleat connected the preservation of local social relations to a role for external agencies such as the Crofting Commission or local authority. And some staff of such bodies may be well aware of these local dynamics: for example, one Crofting Commission member suggested that where conflict had emerged, CLIs might sometimes need the Commission to step in as “the bad guy” (in conversations at 2012 CLS conference).

The preceding paragraphs discuss the hidden face of power and community land initiatives in terms of incentives for participation associated with local social relations. While some, such as the speaker in the second opening quotation, attach value to taking responsibility at local level, they may also acknowledge that avoiding it can be “convenient”. It seems likely that the difficulties in local social relations created by taking such responsibility are what they had in mind. However, as noted in Chapter Two, the analysis of “hidden” power relations in terms of social structures and incentives stops short of considering the cultural contexts in which preferences are formed. The next section therefore explores culture and the third face of power in relation to ideals of community.

**The cultural power of community: solidarity, localism, consensus and fear of politics**

Community may influence participation, not just as a form of social structure, but also as a cultural symbol or ideal. It was suggested earlier that community is used to express
ideas about how local social life should be; and prominent among these were ideals of neighbourly solidarity and co-operation, and friendly social relationships.

These ideals may encourage and strengthen participation. Several people thus referred to serving on community bodies as “doing your bit” for the community. And as discussed in Chapter Five, some in Sleat even see community action – explicitly including land initiatives – as a contemporary successor to past forms of collaborative power that arose in response to the “economic interdependence” (DeRienzo 2008) of previous generations.

Community, then, may be a goal of community land initiatives. The emphasis of many CLIs on population growth and the retention of young people and families in their localities suggests a social structural understanding of community. The power to initiate economic development, or provide social service infrastructure, such as housing, can be seen as the power to make strategic life choices for the community as a collective entity. Without economic and social services, population declines and the community's very survival is imperilled – whether the result is total depopulation or, more likely in the short term, a shift towards a locality as a place for wealthier people to retire to, rather than a demographically mixed population.

As discussed in Chapter Five, community is also understood in terms of social practice, as solidarity and conviviality. These goals may also be served through CLI activity, perhaps as much through the method of organising and generating power as through the projects being undertaken. Collective practices and interaction stimulate ideas and “imaginings” of community and belonging: the social bases for cultural interpretations (Neal and Walters 2008: 282-3, 293).

This interpretation of CLI activity – as helping provide “the glue” that binds communities through shared work – is to some extent anticipated in Jedrej and Nuttall's work. They comment that local economic and resource control issues are more promising focii around which to build local collective power in rural Scotland than cultural issues, which they associate with “divisiveness” and a heightened “anxiety felt towards incomers” (Jedrej and Nuttall 1998: 179-180). And this sense of repurposing of older forms of collective action may not be unique to Scotland. In his comparative
study of agriculture in Skye and western Norway, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig lecturer and Camuscross crofter Gavin Parsons (Parsons 2011: 166) notes the Norwegian “dugnad” system of collective work:

There is a useful word in Norwegian which means a co-operation with neighbours - _dugnad_ – when somebody puts word around that they need help. This _dugnad_ used to be commonly employed for farm work when the majority of it was done by hand, but now it is mostly used for community projects (in urban as well as rural situations).

He goes on to quote a Norwegian interviewee saying that they have used this system to build a village hall and sporting facilities.

However, ideals of community may pose difficulties for participation also. Ideas about respect for your neighbours that encourage mutual aid, may also discourage “interference” in each others’ business. This is evident, for example, in the quotation about building houses on croft land in the discussion of common grazings committees in Chapter Six. Here the incentives to avoid local conflict discussed under “hidden power” above are entwined with those elements of local culture that emphasise self-reliance and independence.

Further, seeing “community” as a quality of social relations akin to friendship, emphasising goodwill and commonality, may cause difficulties when differences of opinion or interests arise. It was notable that in Sleat, in contrast to the positive associations of “community” for most people, “politics” was used almost as its antithesis, to refer to conflict and rancour. In the groups and localities studied, conflict was not always avoided, but there seems to be a widespread feeling that it _should_ be avoided, and that episodes of conflict, or adversarial promotion of one particular viewpoint, were lapses from the ideal – were “not community”.

In this light, elections can perhaps be seen as institutionalised conflict: contestation between individuals is built into the design. The extent to which, in contrast, many CLI Directorship elections are effectively processes of co-option of candidates, rather than contests, was discussed in Chapter Six. In her study of New England town meetings, Mansbridge suggests that friendship provides the model of social relations that culturally underpins many “face-to-face participatory democracies”. She documents a
number of instances where electoral processes were managed in order to avoid open contestation between individuals, and suggests (Mansbridge 1983: 9) that:

friends make their decisions by consensus (...) voting symbolises (...) division.

She counterposes “unitary” democracy to the “adversarial” form associated with contest and conflict. This latter is perhaps the “politics” that Sleiteachs oppose to “community”. (An activist suggesting that interpretations of “what democracy means” may need to adjust to “community scale” working has been reported from another CLI recently studied - see McMorran et al 2013: 24.)

Such a conception of community is rather communitarian. The ideal of community that underlies it may be not so much one of collective struggle against injustice, but of common identity (Delanty 2003: 3). In the case of CLIs, this is likely to be an identity constructed around place. Thus many people emphasised not so much the democratic structures of CLIs as the element of local control – that local people run it. They are relatively happy to “implicitly delegate” the actual running of the organisation to whoever is prepared to do it, provided they are seen as members of the community. In this view, landowners can be seen as members of the community, rather than something apart – as partners rather than antagonists. Such a view may be espoused, even by those who appear somewhat embarrassed about some of its communitarian associations:

it's about, I think, the entire community, the big community, working together. That sounds very David Cameron! Wash out my mouth! (...) But because the Clan Donald is a trust, and the trust is made up greatly of local people as well, and the Sleat Community Trust is made up entirely of local people, and the, CDI is made up entirely of local people. And because the people who work for Fearann Eilean Iarmain are now local people. And, and Lucilla's as local, and Chris's kids go to the school, and, and, you know! You've just got to try and find the best way of working together. And, you know, trying to do a hostile takeover of Fearann Eilean Iarmain, what's that going to gain us?
('Lorna', CDI activist)

Again, this suggests the impact that local residence, investment and participation in local social life makes to attitudes towards landowners. It does not eliminate desire for change or for community ownership, but it certainly seems to limit the popularity of such a strategy. Equally, local control, or the perception of it, may generate support for CLIs, as in the case of this person who had earlier raised a number of objections to the way that CDI had gone about some of their projects:
But, what's happening here is it's the locals who are driving the change. Which is what you would want.

('Malcolm', Camuscross resident).

In sum, there are cultural pressures towards consensus in CLI decision-making, and against the participation of those who feel opposed to CLI projects, in addition to the social pressures outlined above. These include a desire for convivial social relations (Neal and Walters 2008) that conflict potentially threatens; and a feeling that a “community” mode of action is opposed to “politics”. While these are not of CLIs' making, they often appear to aspire to them: thus CDI's slogan is “all pulling together”. However, their logo illustrates this with a sketch of a tug-of-war team: a reference to the Crofting Olympics, but perhaps also to an understanding of community that incorporates ideas about “collective struggle” (Delanty 2003: 3) in some contexts, as well as the avoidance of conflict in others.

As this latter example suggests, such pressures towards consensus are not all-encompassing. The practice of community meetings seemed to allow for questioning and expressions of dissent. Where these occurred, they were not dismissed as inappropriate, either in public or, as far as the data can show, in private conversation afterwards. However, it was notable that a few occasions of open conflict at meetings prior to the start of fieldwork were reported as being quite emotional – a phenomenon Mansbridge also discusses (1983: 62-5). Nor is this communitarian consensus universal. Some people are certainly aware of conflicting interests. And, as detailed in Chapter Five, some are sceptical of the association between community and consensus, or can recount tales of “hidden” conflict in local decision-making spaces (e.g. crofting and grazings committees). But in general, and for various reasons, the desire to avoid open conflict is quite widespread.

What are the power implications of this? Mansbridge suggests that unitary democracies do not promote equal power among their members, but that this does not necessarily produce injustice. Where members of a polity share a common interest, such “unitary” or consensual and deliberative forms of decision-making may be advantageous to all – effectively by encouraging the best exercise of all the powers present within the community (Mansbridge 1983: ix-x, 23-35). In contrast, where interests conflict, insisting on couching debate in terms of the “common good” can obscure the issues at
stake, delegitimise the expression of self-interest, and allow the more powerful to protect their ideas or interests at the expense of others (Mansbridge 2003: 180-183). In terms of community land ownership, to the extent that ideals of “community” help CLIs harness the energies and resources of more powerful local actors, including landowners, they can contribute to local empowerment more widely; but to the extent that they allow those more powerful in decision-making already – by virtue of privileged access to resources, or cultural standing – they limit the impact of CLIs on the redistribution of power at local level.

d. Land and development

Land as a resource: powers and meanings

If you owned the land you could do things - and things couldn't be done to you, to the same extent.

('Michael’, public sector worker)

If implicit support for development and change is part of the “terms of engagement” with CLIs in Sleat, then connections to land as a resource are also important aspects of the power relations that condition participation in CLI decision-making spaces. What is at stake may be different for different people, of course: control over the use of land may impinge on their “strategic life issues” to very different extents. This section considers this in relation to debates over the powers that land ownership gives, and the types of resource that land represents to different residents of Sleat.

The case study of Sleat, and analysis of the wider community land movement, reveal a wide variety of projects being realised through land ownership. Land ownership, in the sense of simple control of physical space, is evidently a particularly multipurpose resource, suitable for taking many specific routes to additive empowerment, e.g. creating housing, employment, generating energy, income from forestry. Landowners are able to “do things”, in the words of the speaker above. As far as “things couldn't be done to you” is concerned, it has been shown that protection from the problems that a negligent or hostile landowner can cause has been a major theme in some cases of community land ownership (e.g. Eigg, Knoydart), and as data from Sleat indicate, is still a factor in people's understanding of the advantages of ownership. Alternative means of accessing land/physical space – such as leases or rentals - generally involve
quite specific terms and conditions on access to the resource. This limits the powers of
the leaseholder, and may in particular constrain them over time from responding to
shifts in wider contexts (Hoffman 2010). Land emerges as a resource that gives a wide
range of powers in a wide range of contexts; ownership as a powerful terms of access
to this resource.

Nevertheless, if control of land is necessary to realise many economic and social goals,
it is not sufficient. It is well recognised internationally that land reforms aimed at
empowering peasant farmers, for example, will fail if land is transferred alone:
beneficiaries generally require other resources – seeds, fertiliser, tools, finance, technical
advice – if their goals for the land are to be realised. Without these, the farmers often
run into difficulties, the land is swiftly put up for sale, and often bought back cheaply
by the original owners (Deininger 1999: 5, Chimhowu 2006: 40). Such considerations
hold for non-agricultural uses of land also. Earlier chapters have explored the funding
and policy support for community land ownership in some detail. Community land
activists themselves are clear on the importance of these:

    to make community landownership work (...) You do need adequate funding.
    You do need legislation because that demonstrates the political will behind it.
    And you do need the technical support where it's missing.
    ('Graham', CLI movement activist)

Land is thus an important element – but just one – of a number of resources that must
be combined to produce sufficient power to undertake development projects.

Land is not simply a resource for economic or social projects, of course. In the
Highlands and Islands, there are multiple interpretations of what land is for. In a similar
fashion to many OECD countries, land is seen as an economic, ecological or social-
recreational resource (OECD 2006). Woods' work on communities and attachment to
place also suggests land's "communal" aspect, partly as an economic or social resource,
but also as a cultural and social-historical symbol; this is alluded to also be Jedrej and
Nuttall in their discussion of the significance of placenames (Jedrej and Nuttall 1996:
121-128). Overlapping these are competing claims on land as private property, and as
public facility. Thus different private landowners adopt different positions towards the
type of resource that land is, pursuing different management goals – profit,
conservation, outdoor recreation (of more or less privatised forms), and others
Community landowners tend to treat land as a public, productive resource – emphasising some of the communal aspects of place attachment. Yet there are variations, even between the two in Sleat, as has been shown above; CDI places much greater emphasis on the cultural significance of land ownership than SCT.

CDI’s focus on the cultural and community heritage aspects of land wins respect from some, but not all. There are, perhaps, parallels between the responses of some crofters to the emergence of the community land movement, and some native Gaelic-speakers to the modern Gaelic revival. Both are cases of social change involving things with great symbolic and identity value to people who identify themselves as Gaels – land, and language. Some Gaels welcome renewed interest from outwith the region, and participate in the new movements. Others may feel that their culture is being encroached on by others, conducting an “invisible power” grab. The social structural claim may be made that “locals” do not participate in these new movements; yet, as the analysis of the social composition of participation in CLIs suggests, this is not wholly accurate. Both positive and negative responses to the community land movement can be found among people with local family roots in Sleat: genealogy does not predetermine one's attitude to community land (or Gaelic). Another response is more purely cultural, denigrating activists' competence (as developers, crofters or linguists) and their moral position (“only in it to line their own pockets”). The claim of land ownership in the name of “community” might be particularly likely to provoke feelings of “encroachment upon their boundaries” (Cohen 1985: 109), and consequent attempts to redraw the boundaries of community to exclude the encroachers.

Cultural considerations may be entwined with social and economic ones. People with crofting rights already have considerable powers over land use. The legal status of these powers is further underpinned by the cultural power of crofting, with all its associations of historical struggle between the community and landowners. Crofters who are active in agriculture, who are regarded as knowledgeable, who hold positions of responsibility in grazings committees, are relatively powerful actors at the local level. The possibility of community ownership of crofting land might be seen as threatening their current position. Crofting bodies would have to share decision-making powers over land, not with a private landowner, but with a community landowner. The wider accessibility of CLI decision-making spaces gives many more people powers over land; and confers the
moral status of “community” on the landowner. This multiplies the potential social risks attendant on land use decision-making, as suggested above. It may also be both culturally and psychologically unsettling; and potentially an obstacle to the principal economic power that crofting rights provide, that of selling land.

The above discussion is based largely on data from Sleat. It cannot necessarily be generalised. In particular, as noted in Chapter Six earlier, a separation between crofting institutions and SCT seems to have been created during the establishment of the Trust. However, other work suggests these issues may be widespread. In an infamous case, Stòras Uibhist was taken to the Land Court by crofters at Askernish, who challenged the CLI’s right to develop a golf course on common grazings land (McMorran et al 2013). Others have noted how questions of who has access to land, what it is used for, are tied up with notions of crofter and community identity, and often contested within communities (Brown 2007). As with some crofters in Sleat, some studies have found crofters reluctant to embark on community land ownership if that would give non-crofters a share in decision-making power over croft land (Lee et al 2005a, Busby and Macleod 2010: 613-616); and moves towards community ownership can lead to visible intra-community conflict around these issues (Brown 2008).

CLI movement activists are well aware of these issues. Notably, the 2012 Community Land Scotland annual conference included a workshop specifically on crofting, where the delicate politics of working with crofters and grazings committees was discussed. The same conference saw a presentation from the North Harris Trust on housing: when the speaker noted that some grazings committees had voluntarily given up land for an affordable housing project, the audience was audibly impressed. This, and other aspects of the crofting workshop discussion (e.g. several CLIs were trying to create new crofts on their land), suggest that the power relationship between crofting institutions and CLIs is not doomed to be conflictual; but that it may often be an important one for both parties.

This discussion of land as a resource presumes that land is an asset – and not a liability; that control of it is on balance empowering rather than constraining. Precisely this issue is often disputed in discussion of Highland landownership, however. The data chapters identified three broad schools of thought in Sleat on the value of land ownership in
relation to community control. The first is the view that land ownership is crucial to power relations in the Highlands and Islands; partly due to the cultural or third face of power that it confers on the owner, but also due to the more visible powers over local development that control of physical space gives. Community ownership is seen as highly desirable. The second is a more pragmatic view of land ownership, which holds that some landed assets might be of value to the owner, but some are not, and takes a case-by-case approach to whether community ownership is appropriate. Finally, there is the view that sees land as placing heavy demands on the time, knowledge and finances of its owners, and sees community ownership as undesirable for this reason. In this thesis, the question that arises is: are these just differences of opinion; or can the working of the third face of power be discerned here?

This question raises the problems of real interests and counterfactual situations discussed in Chapter Two. How is one to judge whether land is an asset or liability, in the inevitable absence of data on what could be done with a particular piece of land if it were managed differently? Various ways of addressing this issue were suggested. Firstly, by looking for “control” situations: in this case, actual examples of community ownership. While these cannot show exactly might happen in Sleat, they suggest whether land ownership is likely to prove a burden to a community. Recent research commissioned by Community Land Scotland appears to show that several CLIs have succeeded in turning loss-making estates into profitable enterprises (Bryan and Westbrook 2014). Certainly, none have thus far been wound up. This appears at odds with several statements made by people in Sleat, who seemed dubious about the financial viability of community ownership. In at least one case, this was linked to a perceived reliance on public subsidy; although it was not entirely clear whether this was thought to be a problem because of its risk, or for moral reasons.

Another way to understand whether or not power relations underlie these differences of opinion is to trace how they arise. Lukes (2005: 132) discusses similar issues under the heading of "adaptive preferences":

adapting one's preferences to what is feasible is sensible and indeed wise... [but the key question is whether] the adaptation is non-autonomous... How, in short, are such preferences formed?
In Sleat, it seems that opinions may have been formed without great knowledge of the current community ownership movement, or the financial status of CLIs. This is understandable enough: despite its relative prominence in the Highlands and Islands media (including the West Highland Free Press), community land ownership is not first headline on the TV news every night, nor does everyone take great interest in the news in any case. It may be part of the background of discussions and conversation; yet against this looms the more immediate background of longstanding private ownership of Sleat, in particular, and of the majority of the Highlands and Islands in general.

Underlying this may be seen questions of preferences for autonomy versus patronage; whether, in the words of a speaker quoted earlier, people felt it was “infinitely better” to decide locally, or whether it was better to rely on the laird. Some local residents did express views that seemed to reflect comfort with private landownership, that community ownership would unsettle. Sometimes this was based on a direct calculation of self-interest. Thus, one owner-occupier said:

As long as the gentry have it [land], we're quite safe from land taxes.
('Catriona', Sleat resident).

Others recalled the beneficial influence of private landowners. Some felt that various landowners' political power had been important in, for example, lobbying to bring mains water to Sleat, or promoting Gaelic. Many pointed to Sir Iain Noble's investment in the peninsula, and the employment generated by the Clan, as detailed earlier. Indeed, while the majority of Clan Trustees remained mysterious figures to most people, there was an association of the impact of the Clan with the personal touch of Ellice McDonald, one of the founding Trustees. His visits to the peninsula were remembered, and people commented that his personal intervention had helped direct Clan funds towards various local projects. On the one hand, these are clear and close at hand benefits arising from private ownership, and weighing them more heavily than potential benefits from community ownership may be a perfectly rational calculation. Yet it is hard not to feel that some, at least, of the wariness and ignorance of community ownership is a product of many decades characterised by an absence of “material as well as discursive alternatives” (Kabeer 1999: 9, footnote) to private ownership.
Finally, is is possible that some people simply see land as not particularly relevant; control of it not a significant life issue. Non-participation in CLI affairs is therefore a rational decision. So, while many people had some opinion about land ownership, and few would dismiss it as totally irrelevant, it was not top priority for many people either. To some extent, this too may be the product of the third face of power, of people becoming accustomed to a status quo where they see little prospect of alternatives, as just mentioned. But in a modern economy, with few people working the land, if someone who is quite economically successful says about land ownership:

   I don't wake up in the morning thinking about it!
   ('Ruaridh', Sleat resident)

this cannot simply be discounted as the product of powerlessness.

**Communities as landowners: questions of capacities**

In an earlier chapter's discussion of Sleiteachs' views on community ownership, perceptions that community land initiatives empower (in terms of access to decision-making space) people who lack appropriate powers in the sense of technical knowledge and skills were briefly mentioned. CLIs were said to be composed of “local goons” who were not fitted for land management.

Such perceptions are not confined to some Sleat residents. Thus one private landowner (Lord Syell, quoted in Peterkin 2014) has publicly argued that:

   “the wider public community” lacks the “qualifications and experience” to have “a stake in ownership, governance and management of land”

These comments were made in Lord Syell's submission to the Land Reform Review Group, a Scottish Government-appointed body considering possibilities for the expansion of community ownership; it can be seen as a direct attempt to influence power relations around land ownership through the assertion that communities lack the capacities required for land management. Community land activists more widely report encountering associations of “community” with amateurism in dealings with policymakers. This was a source of considerable frustration to some:

   people don't get what we're about (…) they think we're running children's playgroups; but we're running major businesses.
Other movement activists felt the association of community with lack of capacity was belied by experience:

People say, communities don't have capacity. And that's a thing we hear all the time (...) But I think the capacities exist, I really really really do, in huge areas of Scotland. And it's just a question of the mechanisms to release that capacity. And it happens, all the time.
('Graham', CLI movement activist).

The question of what powers are needed to be a landowner, and whether communities possess them, can be considered in relation to an examination of actual practice in Scotland. Firstly, it is clear that ownership and management of land are not necessarily vested in the same people. While in some cases, estate owners may be very involved in the detail of the running of the estate, and have accrued a great deal of valuable knowledge and experience, this is not always the case; and particularly for a large estate, professionals will be employed to run it. In Sleat, following the death of Sir Iain Noble and the departure of Christopher Mackenzie from the position of factor with FEI, overall management of the estate is now contracted to CKD Galbraith in Inverness, although the services of the local office staff have been retained, and they may in practice have considerable responsibility still. Now, while it is unlikely that a community organisation will contract out core areas of work to a company based outwith their area, nevertheless existing estate management practices demonstrate that it is not necessary to rely on the skills and knowledge of the owners to run an estate.

Secondly, it is clear that many rural communities today in fact do possess individuals with relevant management expertise. Sleat is not unique in this regard. Around one third of the working population of the Highlands and Islands are engaged in management and professional occupations (National Records of Scotland 2011). And the creation and development of many CLIs has involved drawing on connections between the locality in question and a wide range of people. Sometimes these are retirement in-migrants: the Pairc Trust in the east of Lewis counts John Randall, former Registrar for Scotland, among its directors. Sometimes they are “indigenous” people with management experience: thus both Stòras Uibhist and the North Harris Trust counted fish farm businessmen as key activists. Sometimes the connections are more tenuous: the Isle of
Bute community forestry initiative was partly led by a London-based QC with Scottish roots who happened to own a holiday home on the island.

However, it is also the case that such a demographic mixture is not evenly distributed across all rural areas. There is variation between CLIs in respect of the technical and professional expertise of their activists, and others in the community, in relation to business and land management and planning, and legal skills (Macleod et al 2010). Groups without such skills “in house” may be forced to contract others to do them, introducing extra questions of communication and commitment, as well as straining finances. This is particularly an issue for groups preparing plans prior to purchase, as often these groups have no existing assets and thus generally no operating income. A lack of such additive power at community level therefore increases both the power of funders and outside agencies over CLIs.

Thirdly, there may be other skills that are important for successful land ownership. These may be practical land skills. In Sleat, for example, many of the people who planted Tormore for the Forestry Commission some 40 years ago are still resident - although they have not been involved in the forest purchase or its subsequent management. There will be people with knowledge and skills in relation to the community itself. These may relate to its history, to its current composition, to local social and political relations, or to local cultural practices and understandings. All of these may be important in relation to community organising.

These skills and knowledges can be seen as powers, in the broad sense of capacities. As is explored throughout this thesis, there are many factors which affect who will participate in CLI activities. It cannot be assumed that all the relevant powers present among community members will be exercised. As the quotation from 'Mairi' in Chapter Six illustrates, people may have other demands on their time and energy which make participation more difficult: for example, paid work and/or childcare. There is some evidence that more generally, rural volunteering is dominated by retired people (Skerratt et al 2008: 16, Yates and Jochum 2003: 44 -47), although wider volunteering statistics paint a slightly different picture (see for example, Locke 2008: 5, Hickmann and Manning 2005: 53). However, the point is not that CLIs will always successfully draw on all powers, neither that other landowners (private or public) never will. It may
even be that, bearing in mind the considerations of local politics explored above, it will be simpler to contract an external agent to carry out work, rather than negotiate locally. Rather, the argument is that very often, such powers will be present within communities; therefore, communities should not be seen as intrinsically powerless. Attempts to suggest that they are, then, can be interpreted as the third face of power: whether as examples of conscious manipulation of impressions; or the unconscious reproduction of ideas of community as a residual category, composed of whatever structures are not part of the more powerful private and public sectors.

**Local spaces in a multi-level world: power in coalitions for development**

This thesis has explored the powercube notion that change in power relations might be most significant when action in different spaces and places can be connected up (Gaventa 2006a: 30-31). The history of the community land movement appears to be an instance of such change. The early activists of the Assynt Crofters Trust had little in the way of the first face of power – little money, and no legal right to take over their land as a group; but made effective use of the second and third faces. Acting together they made innovative use of crofting law to establish a *de facto* group claim to the majority of the land for sale, which strengthened their position in negotiations with the vendors. They also drew on cultural themes of the moral rights of crofting and crofters to the land in particular, and “local community” and “David vs Goliath” more generally, to mount a successful fundraising appeal: while also appealing to government agencies through the language of “enterprise”, as a community company. They succeeded in creating a new space at local level for decision-making over the land which they lived on.

Further community land initiatives drew on their example, and took new tactical decisions, for example, to include funders as governance partners in the new community bodies (an option rejected by Assynt). They also drew more heavily on connections with the public sector, both through second face informal technical support and advice, and more formal funding from Highland Council and HIE. This engagement led indirectly to HIE forming the Community Land Unit. The National Lottery also established a Scottish Land Fund, whose board -a key decision-making space - included prominent land reform campaigners. A major increase in community land ownership followed, with groups empowered financially by the Fund, and in the
fields of law, organisation and business planning by the Community Land Unit. This spread of community land ownership must also be seen as occurring in the context of an empowering cultural shift created by devolution, and specifically by the high-profile debates about land reform, initially in such created spaces as the John McEwen lectures, but later in the range of spaces, claimed, invited and closed, which eventually directly produced the Land Reform Act, as well as influencing similar developments e.g. the National Forest Land Scheme. Further discussion and collaboration between HIE and a number of CLI activists led to the formation of Community Land Scotland, which has in turn targeted Scotland-level policy-making spaces to create new spaces accessible to community level actors: notably the second Scottish Land Fund, and the Land Reform Review Group.

How has this co-ordination and connection been achieved? In Chapter Four it was suggested that CLIs can be seen as part of an informal coalition for development in the Highlands and Islands. Thus one movement activist describes them as:

    in effect, small development agencies, social and economic development agencies, they're not viewed that way, but that's what they are.
    ( 'Angus', community land movement activist)

This focus on social and economic development has brought together a network of people from across public, third and private sectors who have been associated with initiatives to stimulate locally-led economic development, and control of land, since the 1970s. Local development contains internal tensions, presuming both that development can and should be locally driven, but also tending to see localities as lacking in power and in need of assistance to undertake development projects. Community land ownership seems to have had some success in reconciling this tension. The control of vital non-land resources (as detailed above) has given policymakers some power over the development orientation of CLI activities, while community activist ideals of localism and mistrust of central control – whether identified with London, Edinburgh or Inverness – finds some satisfaction in local land ownership.

It is important not to see the power relations involved as one-sided. Despite advocacy from some in public and third sectors for crofters to take greater control of land, as evident in the DAFS estates transfer consultation referred to in Chapter Four, the initiative by the Assynt Crofters' Trust seems to have taken many outsiders by surprise.
One leading figure in the public sector side of the informal coalition, John Watt, has emphasised that “the public sector followed” rather than led the community ownership movement (Watt 2012). Equally, many CLI activists are happy to acknowledge HIE and others' role in assembling the extra-local resources necessary to support their local organisations. And the data shows that the tensions are not fully resolved. Contestation over definitions of community, or more subtly, the pressure to present as economically profitable activities that may be better seen as social services (with reference to the Armadale shop and PO), are examples of power struggles where the influence of external organisations in local development strategies plays a part. Again, tensions seen within SCT over the distribution of funds from Tormore Forest can be seen as, in part at least, the product of tensions between instrumentalist views of CLIs as development vehicles, and those that emphasise more the grassroots “community” participation objectives.

In terms of local community participation more generally, there is a clear sense that CLIs are entities whose raison d'être is development and change. For many residents, this is welcome. Indeed, for some people – maybe even the majority - the purpose of CLIs is more to promote local development, than local democracy. This instrumentalist view of CLIs sees the details of CLI internal structures and procedures as relatively unimportant, compared to concrete external impacts in terms of employment and economic opportunities created, services provided, environmental aims achieved, and so on. If governance declines such that organisational effectiveness is compromised (e.g. someone is stealing money from the organisation) that might be an issue; otherwise the focus is elsewhere.

However, this development focus poses a problem for those local residents who are unhappy with this. Given the social and cultural risks of public opposition, as noted above, there may be many who will simply avoid participation, rather than voice their concerns. Such as do may be dismissed as simply “not wanting change”. On the other hand, examples in Assynt over a windfarm (McMorran and Scott 2013: 153, Northern Times 2007) show that such opposition can sometimes emerge, and even defeat CLI management. And there was an awareness of some residents' wariness of development from among CLI activists, who emphasised the need to go slowly when developing projects to bring “the community” with them.
Community land and the Highlands and Islands in Scottish culture

As discussed in earlier chapters, the Highlands and Islands feature prominently in Scottish culture. The community land movement has both benefited and been constrained by this aspect of the third face of power. It has benefited insofar as measures to support community land ownership have been given a political priority greater than they might have been, if measured solely by the numbers of people directly affected. Thus the development and passing of Land Reform (Scotland) Act was one of the centrepieces of the Scottish Parliament's early years, despite around 80% of the population of Scotland being excluded from using its community ownership clauses by virtue of living in urban areas. (It is true that the access legislation which forms Part One of the Act is in principle open to all to use.) One the one hand, community land ownership was cast as a smooth development of the regional culture and history, in the form of gemeinschaft-like notions of “close-knit” rural communities attached to their land, and struggling against the Clearances. But on the other hand, it was presented as a novel and exceptional example of success, agency and innovation in a region associated with depopulation and decline, and perhaps also an overattachment to tradition.

The association of land reform with community ownership in the Highlands and Islands can also be seen as constraining, however. Some within the community land movement are keen to see the principles applied across Scotland as part of a general rural development strategy (or indeed an urban strategy also). They are frustrated when land reform is cast as a regionally-specific response to historical grievances. Other advocates of land reform note that the term has become almost synonymous with “community land ownership”. They lamented, for example, what they see as the reluctance in the Land Reform Review Group's interim report (Land Reform Review Group 2013) to focus on other land-related issues such as land taxation, transparency of ownership, tenant farming, and the relationship between individuals and land in general (Wightman 2013).

Change in these areas of property rights might have much greater immediate repercussions across Scotland. It is possible that Highland exceptionalism – the view that the Highlands and Islands are a special case – has both enabled and constrained community land ownership. In the region, landowners are seen as often leisure-orientated and as having a poor record on economic growth and population retention.
Reforms of property rights in that context can be – and are – depicted as promoting economic as well as social development (e.g. HIE undated: 2). Outwith the region, however, land ownership is much more closely associated with modern agriculture, or with industry and housing in urban and peri-urban areas. Such a calculation alone might not be sufficient to produce action from the Scottish government, but it is possible that it is one factor. Land reform in the Highlands and Islands is compatible with Scottish government policy goals, and the cultural role that the region plays within Scotland helps justify it to the public, while insulating the rest of the Scottish economy from its implications.

Nevertheless, there are signs that this is changing. Firstly, CLS is increasingly making connections with wider international movements for community land rights (Community Land Scotland 2014b). Such connections have previously been made by academic commentators (Toulmin and Pepper 2000, Bryden and Geisler 2007), and there is certainly much that the international literature can offer on subject such as “willing seller” land reform mechanisms, or community resource politics (see e.g. Lahiff 2007, Tilley 2007, Caldeira 2008, Hall 2009, Wolford 2010).

This has attracted attention in the Scottish Parliament, but on its own it might have limited impact. Yet there are more substantial changes underway, with new spaces focussing on land and asset ownership opening up at national level. The Land Reform Review Group was restructured following the publication of its interim report. Its final report, “The Land of Scotland and the Common Good” (Land Reform Review Group 2014) is, as the title suggests, much wider ranging. In the preface, the authors state that (Land Reform Review Group 2014: 9):

Historically, land reform has largely been perceived as a rural development issue. This Report seeks to challenge that perception, by illustrating the importance of land – and how it is owned, managed and used – to the everyday lives of people throughout urban and rural Scotland.

Their 62 recommendations (which range over issues far beyond community ownership) include extending the Land Reform Act's Community Right to Buy to cover urban areas (Land Reform Review Group 2014: 98); and extending community ownership support (such as that provided by HIE's Community Assets Team) to the whole of Scotland (Land Reform Review Group 2014: 116). At the same time, the Scottish Government's
draft Community Empowerment Bill has been published for consultation, which provides for just such an extension of the Right to Buy, and addresses other issues of community powers over local resources across Scotland (Scottish Government 2014). And as backdrop to these processes is the national debate on the future of Scotland which is building in advance of the autumn 2014 referendum on independence. It may be that the distinctive cultural role of the Highlands and Islands has allowed innovations to be developed there which – perhaps in part thanks to that region's symbolic significance in narratives of Scottish uniqueness - are now crossing into the rest of Scotland.
Chapter Nine  Conclusions

a. Review of the thesis

This thesis has examined Scottish community land ownership through the lenses of power and community. At the outset it asked what impact Community Land Initiatives (CLIs) have had on power relations, particularly at local level; and, if and how their conception as “community” initiatives affects that.

The analysis was situated within a wider body of work on participation in decision-making spaces, that incorporates concerns with the power implications of the spatial scale and design of such institutions, as well as their enmeshment in wider social and cultural structures. There are links between this work and theories that address social and cultural aspects of community, as well as its use in policy and the relationship between the local and wider scales of activity. The empirical research took the form of an in-depth qualitative case study of two emerging CLIs in the Sleat peninsula of the Isle of Skye. The selection of cases was justified on the grounds that, while not fitting the large estate “community buyout” profile popularly associated with community land ownership, smaller scale initiatives are more numerous, and there is still much that can be learnt from them. The in-depth qualitative methodology was the most appropriate for implementing the analytical framework, given that framework's emphasis on the importance of the essentially qualitative, and potentially complex, task of understanding the social implications and cultural meanings of actions, as well as the more “visible” actions themselves.

The data presented includes both material gathered through fieldwork in Sleat on community, land and power, and a mixture of primary and secondary data on the wider community land movement's development and power relations. It shows that the growth of the community land movement in the Highlands and Islands can be linked to the cultural resonance of a distinctive history of land and power, but also a combination of political and social change at multiple levels: from localities (the mix of skills and legal powers within the crofting system) to the region as a whole (for example, the role of HIE) and further afield (for example, Scottish devolution). Contemporary CLIs owe their power, then, both to organising at local level, but also to a network of relationships with actors elsewhere, including funding and support agencies. Balancing all these
relationships can be challenging, with different actors' understandings of key concepts, such as “community”, not always coinciding.

Local practices and understandings of community were explored, with the term being used both to reflect actuality, and to express ideals of how life in Sleat should be. The primacy of township rather than the peninsula as a whole in expressions of attachment to place was noted; other important dimensions of community were its association with neighbourly solidarity, and convivial social relations. Importantly, some suggested that community projects might serve to build social relations along these lines. However, against these positive associations, a significant minority of research participants expressed dissatisfaction with community; either in its present-day actuality, or as a mythical ideal that obscured conflict, or checked individual entrepreneurialism and responsibility.

Power relations around land use decision-making spaces at Sleat level were examined, with a particular focus on those of CLIs. While participation in CLI activities was socially wider than some local perceptions might suggest, it was still notable that the key decision-making spaces retained something of an invited rather than open flavour to them. Factors influencing participation or non-participation were discussed, ranging from “power within” to attitudes to CLI projects. Community attitudes to other actors, and relations between them, were also explored.

The thesis then moved to outline the major land-based projects undertaken by Sleat CLIs. Sleat Community Trust's projects have focussed on service provision and income generation, in order to provide both additive empowerment to local residents (meeting needs and opening up economic opportunities) and thus sustain community as social structure. Two controversies over the Tormore Forest project have been encountered; the transportation question was addressed through creating further open spaces for public participation, while the question of the distribution of funds was more closely controlled by SCT Directors. Still, concerns about lack of local distribution were addressed and a wide range of local projects have been supported by SCT.

CDI's projects have yet to bear fruit to the same extent, but in both design and implementation are relatively more focussed on sustaining the community as social
interaction. They have also presented challenges to the organisation, this time in relation to access to crofting land for development, shedding light on the complexities and delicacy of power relations even at very local level.

However, it was noted that the major land-based development projects in Sleat in recent decades have been undertaken by private landowners. In the light of this, support for larger-scale community ownership in Sleat is perhaps surprisingly strong; but nevertheless, it is hardly overwhelming. Alongside advocates of community ownership on social justice and cultural empowerment grounds, a more pragmatic approach to assets and development is widespread. So too are concerns to minimise conflict, and work with the power of existing landowners – sometimes amounting almost to a preference for patronage rather than local autonomy.

**Power and community in community land ownership**

Sleat Community Trust's activities have contributed some measure of additive empowerment to the residents of Sleat. While these were relatively minor and narrowly geographically distributed in its early years, they are increasing in significance and social reach as SCT's operations in forestry expand. In the distribution of resources locally, particularly from the Community Funds, a shift from unitary notions of the common good towards an implicit understanding of the kinds of turn-taking and justice over time strategies that Mansbridge discusses (Mansbridge 2003: 180-182) may be discerned. CDI has had little impact on economic or service infrastructure to date, but can be seen to have built some collective power, through a focus on the cultural and convivial aspects of community that has considerable local resonance.

Turning to how power relations influence power in decision-making spaces, it is clear that, where CLIs acquire land and assets, they shift visible power from landowners to community groups. The possibility of such acquisitions also seems to be inducing other shifts in power, with CLIs becoming accepted as locally representative actors who are included in some other local decision-making spaces, or may even play a role in initiating them (e.g. the Sleat Development Forum). And they also are beginning to shift cultural perceptions of who and what land is for – although this is still very much an area of contestation.
However, power relations at local level shape participation in CLI decision-making spaces. These are closely connected to experiences and ideas of community: socially, in the form of multiplex networks of social relations and the demands of everyday life outwith decision-making spaces; and culturally, in the form of ideas about solidarity and mutual aid that provide support for participation, but also in the form of ideas about individualism, non-interference and consensus that constrain it. It is important to realise the power of these social and cultural patterns is not absolute. They are to some extent contradictory; and Sleat, like any locality, is exposed to a wide range of other cultural influences from far beyond the local. Nor are local social and cultural practices experienced equally by everyone, for a mixture of structural and idiosyncratic reasons. Thus a wider range of people participate, and a wider range of views are publicly expressed, than this analysis might superficially appear to predict. Yet, to the extent that the constraints are ignored both in relation to participation in decision-making processes themselves, and in respect of the decisions made and projects undertaken as a result, they limit CLIs' ability to transform power relations at local level, rather than simply reflect them.

There is some evidence to suggest that CLI activists do try to address such local power relations, through a concern with the distributive impact of their projects, and, to an extent, by proactively engaging those who may not otherwise participate. There are also some grounds for suggesting that some non-participation is not only the result of relative powerlessness and barriers, but a conscious, empowered decision. Some may support the broad aims of CLIs, but prefer to informally delegate the onerous and controversial aspects of their work to others, seeing them primarily as vehicles for local development, rather than local democracy. Others may remain apart from initiatives precisely because they are perceived as threatening existing power structures around land and community, which empower them, or which they feel attached to.

b. Contribution and limitations of the thesis

Contributions
This thesis makes several contributions to the literature on Scottish community land ownership, and to wider literatures. Discussing the Scottish literature first, it is notable that previous studies have tended to focus on larger-scale groups, better established as
landowners: for example, Eigg (Dressler 2007), Gigha (Didham 2007, Satsangi 2009), North Harris (Busby and Macleod 2010, Mackenzie 2012, McMorran and Scott 2013), Knoydart (McMorran and Scott 2013), and the Assynt groups (McMorran and Scott 2013, MacPhail 2002). This thesis, with its focus on emerging CLIs in Sleat, extends the coverage of the existing body of research on community land ownership, both in terms of geography, and stages of institutional development.

In terms of theoretical development of the literature, several previous studies have focussed on community land ownership in relation to sustainable development (Didham 2007, Glass et al 2013, McMorran et al 2013) community resilience (Skerratt 2013) or cultural geographies (MacPhail 2002, MacKenzie 2012), or have touched on issues of community and land ownership while mainly focussed on crofting (Lee et al 2005a, Brown 2007, Brown 2008, Busby and Macleod 2010). Many of these touch on the issues discussed in this thesis at various points. Further, the grey literature frequently refers to a “sense of empowerment” (SQW 2007, Slee et al 2008), and contains lists of concrete “impacts” that can be used to look at various aspects of power and empowerment. Yet prior to this study, this has not been incorporated into a broader analysis using a more comprehensive approach to power, integrated with analysis of community and resources.

The approach used here goes some way towards filling some gaps in this existing literature. The work that deals with crofting and community, while rich on the relationship between the two in general, has generally not closely studied the crofter-CLI relationship at local level (an exception being MacPhail's fine-grained account of the emergence of the Assynt Crofters' Trust). The present study provides that detail on the local power dynamics around crofting, crofters and the development of CLIs in one particular area, as well as noting wider trends.

Mackenzie's work provides detail on the development of Western Isles CLIs, in particular the North Harris Trust. However, her neo-Foucauldian perspective leads her to focus her analysis on discourse and norm-setting (and norm-disrupting) at a broad societal level. Thus, there is a wealth of discussion on the relationship between the practices and policies of these CLIs, and wider cultural and political trends of “neo-liberalism”. Yet there is relatively little material on intra-community variation in
relationships with the CLIs, and micro-level politics – although at times she does explore such issues (e.g. Mackenzie 2012: 58-70, Mackenzie 2006: 387-8). In contrast, the present study's broad approach to power relationships, and focus on meanings of community and micro-level contexts, allows for greater detail in the data on the complexity of local power relationships, and consequently the relationship between community and resources that she is also interested in.

The sustainable development literature on community land ownership also contains much relevant detail, and some (especially McMorran et al 2013) discusses power relations, including cultural aspects of power and the dynamics of participation in governance structures. It is suggested that a key issue is “community cohesion” (McMorran et al 2013: 21). In a similar fashion to the present thesis, they conclude that land ownership increases local actors' power to direct local development initiatives, but this also increases the responsibility placed on local activists' and community members' shoulders for community outcomes. A number of factors around social structures and practices of communication and conflict management are identified as influencing the extent to which community ownership either drives conflict, and decreases overall community cohesion (through increasing the visibility of hidden power struggles, or challenging invisible power relations, in the terminology employed in this thesis); or contributes to cohesion and sustainability through providing opportunities for “a reinvigorated citizenship at local levels” (McMorran et al 2013: 30). However, they also suggest that the reality of the enmeshment of local initiatives in extra-local power relations (another theme of the present thesis) may restrict the possibilities for such local responsibility-taking.

As indicated, this material and analysis is insightful and has several points of contact with that presented in this thesis. However, as with Mackenzie's work, the analytical focus is elsewhere: primarily on how these issues affect community ownership's categorisation as “sustainable” or not, where “community cohesion” is identified as a key issue (McMorran et al 2013: 21). The contribution of my thesis is to show how a framework based explicitly around power, with the analysis of community integrated into it, can provide further insight into these kinds of issues in community land ownership.
Secondly, while the primary contribution of this thesis will be to the literature on Scottish community ownership it also contributes to wider debates about power, place and community (Cornwall 2002, Gaventa 2006a, Crow 2008, Brodie et al 2009). It applies the conceptual framework developed by Cornwall and Gaventa to a new empirical setting, answering the call (Cornwall 2002: iii) for studies of:

the micro-politics of participation.

While the powercube and related work on spaces of power has previously been applied to participatory initiatives in the global North, the focus has often been on state-initiated participation; and, therefore, predominantly on invited spaces. (A prominent exception is the collection of case studies of policy contestation in Leat 2010, but here the focus is on the state at national level, although perhaps there is more emphasis on the possibility of “claiming” state decision-making spaces.) In contrast, this thesis contributes a study of power relations in citizen-created spaces. It explores the intra-local dynamics which affect participation and decision-making in these spaces; it also examines the extent to which other organisations at various spatial levels, including state bodies, exercise or enjoy power in them, and why – looking at questions of e.g. access to financial resources, or the powers offered by the use of land reform legislation.

It also develops the powercube model conceptually. It incorporates a discussion of resources into all aspects of the powercube model, and, in Chapter Four, material on the differential impacts of political, legal and economic power relations. This is something that the original model, focussed as it was on understanding power relations within invited spaces, rather than the broader impact of development initiatives, tended to overlook. Again, many previous uses of the model focus on “zero-sum” power relations: the framework developed for this study attempts to integrate collaborative and other forms of power relationship into the analysis. And it suggests a distinction between decision-making power, and additive “power to”, which may be of use in other studies of power relations around community development organisations (or indeed organisations more generally).

In so doing, it also makes a contribution to the vast wider literature on power; one that attempts to combine empirical detail with a clear theoretical approach (something some feel is sometimes lacking in empirical studies purporting to address questions of
power (Gaventa 2003: 12)). Again, it sits within the broadly Weberian tradition (developed by Bourdieu and Lukes among others) that sees power as differentially distributed between individuals, and generated through their social relationships, while attempting to integrate concerns about structural and cultural issues into the analysis. However, influenced by Mann (1986) among others, it combines this with an allowance for the possibility of mutually beneficial, and/or collaborative, power relationships.

It further seeks to link the assumptions about common interests and the common good underpinning the deliberative democracy literature (Mansbridge 1983, Fung and Wright 2003), and to work on “community” as a symbol of the common good, and explore implications of this for the politics of participation.

Finally, it makes a contribution to a number of literatures on local development. As with the literature on community land ownership, it offers a new framework to complement and/or extend the analysis of power relations in rural community development, both in Scotland and more widely (for example: Jedrej and Nuttall 1996; Burnett 1998; Ray 1998; Shucksmith 2000, 2009, Mackinnon 2002, Lee et al 2005a, 2005b). There are further possible connections with literature on local urban development in the global North, (e.g. Raco and Flint 2001, Taylor 2007, DeFilippis and Saegert 2008, Lawless 2011). Broader still, it draws on a number of works often categorised as “development studies” (much of Gaventa and Cornwall’s work; also notably Kabeer 1999, Sen 1999, Mosse 2007) and uses them in a study of local development in the global North. This contributes to the wider use of the analytical insights gained in this relatively new field; the further recognition of the connections between this work and the more established social science disciplines; and in the longer run, perhaps, to further comparative social research that explores the points of similarity and difference across the boundaries of “North” and “South”.

**Limitations**

This thesis has presented the results of exploratory rather than deductive research. Chapter Three explored the interpretative methodological positions that inform the approach taken. Without rehearsing all the arguments explored there again, it bears repeating in this concluding chapter that knowledge claims made in the thesis are therefore not absolute. Instead, they represent, on the basis of a necessarily partial (in
the senses both of incomplete, and relative to a particular analytical framework) examination of social realities in one particular part of the world, the researcher's best efforts at interpreting and explaining some of those realities.

Such transparency about the production processes, and modesty about the significance of the thesis, should not be taken to mean that its conclusions are of no value. They may stimulate reflection and practice by other researchers, commentators, activists or policymakers with an interest in community land, or community development more generally. However, it does also encourage an awareness of the limitations of the thesis, and how some of these might be remedied through future work.

While this study used some of the methods and approach of ethnography, it was perhaps limited, in terms of time and depth of immersion in Sleat. It is perhaps a consequence of this that there are a number of limitations of the data on such sensitive, “backstage” subjects as poverty and inequality, gender, or age, in relation to local political participation. There is also a relative lack of existing landowner perspectives on CLI development in Sleat. These could be remedied by further research in Sleat looking at these topics. And there are more, that surfaced infrequently in the data, but are intriguing from the point of view of uncovering further aspects of land-related power relations at multiple levels, for example, the local politics of claiming of various state agricultural subsidies.

Moving beyond the micro level, the macro study of the CLI movement could benefit from more data, qualitative and quantitative, at policy level and on relations between different actors in the movement and linked to it (including in particular funding and support agencies). This could include an element of historical research to trace the formation of the “multi-level coalition for development” referred to earlier. Further, more micro-level studies could enable comparisons to build up a richer picture of the aspects of power and community that the study of Sleat suggests are present. Thus the present study could be well complemented by further study of other community land owning groups in different contexts: a larger-scale initiative in the Western Isles, Galson for example; and/or one of the initiatives in a more lowland area such as Comrie or Neilston (building on e.g. Gallacher 2008). The question of relationships between community landowners and other institutions operating at different spatial scales is
particularly interesting in the Western Isles, where a majority of the population now live on land owned by community groups, and initiatives to negotiate a collective relationship with the local authority are underway.

The concepts of power and community are of course applied in research far beyond the Highlands and Islands. While some of this literature, particularly in relation to community asset ownership, has been reviewed for this thesis, there is more that could be done there – particularly in cases where, as in e.g. urban development trusts, resident-controlled housing associations, or neighbourhood regeneration committees, there appear to be significant overlaps in terms of organisational structures and ethos with the community land movement. As noted towards the end of the previous chapter, there is a considerable international literature on land reform, including the role of communities, where comparisons with the Scottish experience may be fruitful. The further development of some of the analytical conclusions in the present thesis, and its bringing into wider academic conversations covering some of these other cases, through academic papers and presentations, is a task the author hopes to accomplish in due course. In the meantime, the task remains, alluded to towards the end of Chapter Three, of constructing a version of the findings brief, readable and sensitive enough to be accessible to the people they are about: the people of Sleat.
Appendix One

Information sheet sent to prospective case study CLIs, 2011

Community land reform in Scotland – PhD study
Tim Braunholtz-Speight

Introduction
I am a part-time PhD student at the University of the Highlands and Islands Centre for Remote and Rural Studies. I am studying community land reform in Scotland. I am hoping to understand more about the social side of land reform, looking at what land reform does for the community.

This means understanding the impacts for individual community members and the community as a whole. It also means looking both within the community, and outwith it e.g. at community relations with local authorities or other organisations. And it means looking at both more visible impacts, like jobs, or participation in land use decision-making; and less visible impacts, like people's understandings of the place they live and visions for the future. (In academic sociology terms, it is a study of “community empowerment”.)

I hope this will make a constructive contribution to debates on topics such as community development, rural development and of course Scottish land reform.

Research methods
I will be studying two communities that have undertaken land reform: one in the remoter/crofting areas of the west coast/islands, and one elsewhere in rural Scotland with a different spatial and historical context. There are three main research techniques I will use:
1. **documents:** consulting documents, both local – e.g. community land owner plans and minutes, community newsletters etc, local media; and external – reports, census data etc.
2. **time in the community:** my plan is to spend 2 x 1 month periods in the community over one year, participating in the life of the community in whatever way I can.
3. **interviews:** later in the year I would like to interview some key people, once I have spent some time learning how things work. This will include community members in general, community land organisation directors and staff, and people outwith the community – e.g. in local authorities or other significant organisations.

Use of material and confidentiality
The main output of my research will be my PhD thesis, which is due for completion in 2013. I am happy to share the thesis or relevant extracts with anyone who participates in this research. I will also hope to produce academic articles from this thesis, which I will likewise be happy to share.

Regarding confidentiality:
- I am planning to name the communities that I study. However, no interviewees will be named in my thesis, and no quotations will be linked to specific individuals.
- I would like to record all interviews, with permission. I will transcribe the audio files myself – all recordings are strictly “for my ears only”. I am happy to show any interview transcripts to interviewees, but of course not to anyone else.
- All sensitive files - interview files (audio and transcription), notes etc - will be password-protected. If you have any concerns about any of this please feel free to raise them with me at any time.

My contact details
If you would like further information about any of this, please feel free to contact me:
work phone: 01463 273 566
mobile: 0775 131 8982
email: tim.braunholtz-speight@inverness.uhi.ac.uk
Centre for Remote and Rural Studies, Academy Lodge, Crown Avenue, Inverness, IV2 3NG.
www.crrs.uhi.ac.uk
Appendix Two
Research Participant Information Sheet

PhD study of community empowerment and community land ownership in Scotland

Information Sheet

Who am I?
My name is Tim Braunholtz-Speight, and I am a part-time PhD student at the University of the Highlands and Islands. I live in Inverness with my wife and two children, and study through Inverness College.

What am I studying?
I am studying the phenomenon of community groups in Scotland buying land (or buildings) to run for the benefit of the community. I am trying to find out if, and how, this contributes to “community empowerment” – and what that means in practice.

What does my study involve?
To do this, I am making a case study of community groups in Sleat that have taken ownership of land or buildings. I am looking at if, and how, what they do makes a difference to the wider community.

I am mainly interviewing and talking with people in Sleat, as well as some people outside the area with a knowledge of it or dealings with it. I am also researching community land ownership more generally, to put the case study in context; and using statistics (e.g. population figures) and other data to provide background to my study.

What does my study lead to?
I have to produce a “thesis”, a written document about 100,000 words long, and submit this for examination in autumn 2013. I will let people in Sleat know how they can get hold of a copy when it is finished. I hope to produce a shorter and more readable version, which I will make sure is available in Sleat. Later on I will also seek to write articles for academic journals based on my studies.

Confidentiality
It is important to me that anyone who helps me with this research can say what they want in confidence. No names will be mentioned and no individuals identified in my written work. I am taping some interviews (with permission of interviewees of course). The transcription of these recordings will be done by me – this is “for my ears only”.

Contact details
If you have any questions, or want to get in touch with me for any reason, here's how:

Centre for Remote and Rural Studies
Inverness College UHI
Midmills Campus
Crown Avenue
Inverness, IV2 3NG

email: 08007823@inverness.uhi.ac.uk
phone: 0775 131 8982
Appendix Three

Tormore Haulage Accord
TIMBER HAULAGE ACCORD - TORMORE FOREST TO ARMADALE JUNCTION

PARTNERS:
SLEAT COMMUNITY TRUST
SLEAT RENEWABLES LTD
SCOTTISH WOODLANDS LTD
SLEAT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Overview
Scottish Woodlands Ltd, as agents for Sleat Community Trust, has prepared this timber haulage accord to cater for haulage of timber and machinery between Tormore Forest and the junction of the C1224 and A852 at Armadale. The route is classified as a Consultation Route under the Highland Timber Transport Group.

This accord is intended to minimise disruption to the local community and visitors to the area, to minimise the chances of lorries meeting on the single track road and to allow the road structure time to recover between individual lorry movements.

1. Exclusion times for movement through the village.
Haulage will only be carried out Monday - Friday.
Lorries should avoid moving through the village of Ardvasser during the following times:
08:30 - 09:15
15:15 - 16:15

No haulage through the village between 09:45 & 12:15 on Tuesdays (Mother & Toddler Play Group: 10 – 12 pm in Ardvasser Hall).

There will be a general restriction on any lorry movements between the hours of 20:00 and 06:30.

2. Minimum separation between lorries.
Lorries will have a minimum separation of 20 minutes to avoid meeting on the single track road and to reduce the (negative) perception of convoy working.

3. Number of lorries per day.
There will be a maximum of 6 lorry loads of timber extracted per day. All lorries must be fitted with, and utilising, Central Tyre Inflation (CTI) along the Consultation Route.

4. Damage to verges
Lorry drivers should take every care not to pull lorries off the main carriageway and should use the main passing places wherever possible – in order to limit possible damage to kerbs, verges, ditches and culverts.

5. Speed Limit through Ardvasser village
Lorries will be restricted to a maximum of 20mph at all times whilst travelling through the village of Ardvasser and will pay particular attention to other road users, especially children and other pedestrians. This speed restriction to be publicised and reinforced at forest and village threshold signage (see below).
6. Threshold Signs
Scottish Woodlands will erect threshold signs to advise the public of active periods of timber haulage for the duration of these operations and to advertise SCT & SWL contact details for public enquiries/feedback. In addition speed restriction signs (relevant to timber hauliers) will be erected to reiterate the 20mph maximum speed limit to lorry drivers.

7. Non-Normal Operations
In the event of extraordinary circumstances such as breakdowns, in-forest delays etc Scottish Woodlands Ltd and/or the haulier will advise Sleat Community Trust (Armadale office).

8. Contact Numbers
Sleat Community Trust (Chris Marsh – Community Forester) - 01471 844773 / 07799 388120
Scottish Woodlands Ltd (Adam Lewis – Harvesting Manager) - 01997 420040 / 07899 902826
Highland Council TEC Services (Gordon MacDonald – Senior Engineer) - 01478 612727
Appendix Four

Interview Topic Guide

This appendix presents the topic guide used to structure the semi-structured interviews conducted in Sleat. The topics were not always covered in the order presented here; an effort was made to allow conversation to flow, and follow the lead of the research participant, as much as possible. Rather, the guide was used as a checklist, to ensure that each interview covered the full range of topics (although inevitably each interview varied slightly in the amount of time spent on each area). This facilitated striking a balance between a “natural” interviewing style, and a systematic approach to data collection.

**You**

How long have you lived in Sleat?
How did you come to be living here?
How do you make a living here?

**Power**

*Participation*

Have you had any involvement with community land groups/ with SCT and/or CDI?
Which ones?
   - If yes – how did you get involved? Why?
   - If no – is there any reason why not?

Have you stood /tried to become a Director of SCT/ CDI/ any other community group?
How are Directors appointed?

*Project and change*

How do you feel the CLIs are doing? (prompt for specific projects)
If you wanted to change something, or get something done, locally – what would you do?

*Landownership*

What are the landowners in Sleat like?
What do you think of community land ownership:
   - In general?
   - Here?

**Community**

*Community*

Do you belong to a community/communities? (if yes) which one(s)?
What do you think of it?

*Change*

Has it changed in your time here?
Would you like to change it?
What (if anything) does it need? What would be good?
(if anything suggested) who could do this?

*Future visions*
How do you see the future?
Do you see your future here?
## Appendix Five

### Formal Meetings Attended for Data Collection

This table lists all the formal “business” meetings, public and private, that I attended as part of my data collection, within and outwith Sleat. They are presented in chronological order.

I also attended a wide range of social and cultural events (including the ceilidh in memory of Sir Iain Noble organised by CDI) and informal meetings, which are not listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Details of meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative</td>
<td>Board of Directors regular meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday 6\textsuperscript{th} July 2011</td>
<td>39 Camuscross, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleat Community Trust</td>
<td>AGM</td>
<td>Monday 31\textsuperscript{st} October 2011</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative</td>
<td>Board of Directors special meeting with Sustainable Community Hub Design Team</td>
<td>Thursday 3\textsuperscript{rd} November 2011</td>
<td>2 Cruard, Camuscross, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative</td>
<td>First community consultation on the Sustainable Community Hub</td>
<td>Saturday 19\textsuperscript{th} November 2011</td>
<td>An Talla Dearg (art gallery), IsleOrnsay, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleat Community Trust</td>
<td>Tormore Forest progress and plans public consultation (check their title)</td>
<td>Saturday 26\textsuperscript{th} November 2011</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleat Community Council</td>
<td>Regular monthly public meeting</td>
<td>Tuesday 7\textsuperscript{th} February 2012</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal group of Skye residents</td>
<td>Public meeting about Citylink bus services with Citylink managers</td>
<td>Wednesday 8\textsuperscript{th} February 2012</td>
<td>Broadford Village Hall, Broadford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Government Ferries Review – Sleat Response Steering Group</td>
<td>Initial meeting</td>
<td>Tuesday 14\textsuperscript{th} February 2012</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Land Scotland</td>
<td>AGM and Annual Conference</td>
<td>Tuesday 13\textsuperscript{th} – Wednesday 14\textsuperscript{th} March 2012</td>
<td>Tobermory, Isle of Mull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleat Community Trust</td>
<td>Board of Directors regular monthly</td>
<td>Monday 30\textsuperscript{th} April 2012</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camuscross and Duisdale Initiative</td>
<td>Third community consultation on the Sustainable Community Hub</td>
<td>Saturday 5th May 2012</td>
<td>Talla Duisdale (Duisdale Hall), Duisdale, Sleat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Land Scotland</td>
<td>Regional day workshop</td>
<td>Friday 8th March 2013</td>
<td>Spectrum Centre, Inverness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Land Scotland</td>
<td>AGM and Annual Conference</td>
<td>7th - 8th June 2013</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Sleat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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