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'Incomers' leading 'community-led' low carbon initiatives: a contradiction in terms?

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Abstract

'Community' is frequently identified as an important element of sustainable development policy, with communities thought to be particularly effective spaces in which to encourage individuals to adopt low carbon practices. The potential power of a community-based approach derives from the ability of community groups to tap into existing social networks and local bonds of trust to communicate messages and enact change. To date, there has been little consideration of the position and influence of newcomers to communities within this rationale. This paper explores this issue through two government funded, community-led sustainability projects in rural Scotland. We observe that the majority of those most actively involved in these two projects had migrated to the communities and were considered 'incomers' by both themselves and other 'local' residents. Drawing these observations together with literature on rural migration and participation in community activity, we explore the potential implications for the outcomes of initiatives seeking to influence lifestyle change. We question whether projects that are established by, and primarily comprised of, individuals who are not necessarily considered 'locals' locally undermines part of the rationale behind a 'community-led' approach.

Keywords

Community; Climate change; Sustainable development; Scotland; Rural

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1. Introduction

There has been a well-documented shift in policymaking away from a hierarchical, top-down structure of government towards a more flexible and inclusive system of governance, where responsibility and authority are shared by actors and institutions within and beyond the state (Stoker, 1998; Swyngedouw, 2005; Jessop, 2016; Clarke, 2005, 2013; Peck and Tickell, 2002). Global efforts to enact sustainable development arguably represent the epitome of this 'turn to governance' (Jessop, 2000; Bulkeley et al., 2013), with multi-stakeholder co-operation and civic participation explicitly instilled as fundamental principles of sustainable development (United Nations, 1992).

Embedded within this multi-sector, trans-scalar approach has been an emphasis on the potential role for 'community' (Bailey and Pill, 2015; Raco, 2005), with discourses of personal and community responsibility closely entwined with the rhetoric of sustainable, low carbon societies (Jewkes and Murcott, 1998; Little, 2002). As well as being identified as a space where global environmental issues can be translated into more tangible and addressable local concerns (Bridger and Luloff, 1999, 2001; Macnaghten, 2003), communities are also observed to have a specific social function in facilitating more sustainable lifestyles. It is argued that individuals are more likely to trust messages that come from community peers (Reeves *et al.*, 2013) and 'the community' is thought to play a key role in the construction and maintenance of descriptive and injunctive norms, which influence behaviours, practices, and lifestyles (Peters and Jackson, 2008). Tapping into the trust, knowledge and social cohesion of community groups has consequently been identified as "crucial to the diffusion of social signals in promoting patterns of behaviour" (Peters *et al.*, 2010, p. 7597).

The challenge for any policy employing notions of community is the necessity to impose a definition of who or what constitutes 'the community'. As Raco and Flint (2001, p. 591) have observed, policymaking has a tendency to convert the "chaotic existence of places" into "containers [which] act as 'calculable spaces' in which community interests are identified, defined and institutionalised by policy makers in ways which facilitate particular types of decision-making or policy implementation". However, several studies have identified that, instead of galvanising entire geographically-defined populations, community-led sustainability initiatives are frequently led and delivered by small groups of interested individuals (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Aiken, 2012; Barr and Devine-Wright, 2012; Cooper et al., 2012; Svensson, 2012), who are typically "the most visible and vocal", wealthier, more articulate, and better educated groups (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000, p. 45). It has been argued that local sustainability movements consequently risk being exclusionary by reflecting only middle-class interests and beliefs about the 'right way to live' (Dupuis and Goodman, 2005). This raises questions about the potential of community-based projects to exacerbate – rather than address – inequalities both within and between communities (Catney

et al., 2014; Grossmann and Creamer, 2017), and complicates the logic of community-based policy interventions, which are typically assumed to be apolitical and inclusive (Kenis and Mathijs, 2014).

Rural communities arguably present a particularly interesting site to examine these local dynamics as it is traditionally assumed that 'community' is more clearly manifested and maintained in rural places (Tönnies, 1887; Woods, 2005; Bridger and Alter, 2006). However, rural communities have undergone significant social change in recent decades, including the arrival of middle-class urban in-migrants in search of 'the good life' (Murdoch, 2006). There is evidence that these 'incomers' are often particularly willing and able to participate in, and lead, community-based projects (Little and Austin, 1996; Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Crow et al., 2001). This has been observed to garner a mixed reaction from 'local' community members, who sometimes resent "pushy" incomers who appear to be taking over local organisations (Masson, 2007, p.35). Drawing these observations together suggests that – far from being apolitical – community-based sustainability initiatives are likely to be embedded within a highly complex and intriguing web of local political dynamics which has been under-examined.

Drawing on ethnographic research with two community-led sustainability initiatives in rural Scotland, we observe that the majority of those most actively involved in both community groups studied were middle-class in-migrants, considered 'incomers' by both themselves and other 'local' residents, which affected their ability to encourage lifestyle change. There was a general expectation that 'incomers' should attempt to blend in with the existing way of life and consequently some 'local' community members linked the activity of the groups with the notion of the 'white settler', implying a threat of enforced sociocultural change (Dickson, 1994; Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Watson, 2003).

These observations have implications for community-led initiatives seeking to influence lifestyle change, where the potential value of the community-led approach is partially predicated on its localness, inclusiveness and an assumed associated ability to leverage local social networks to achieve change. We therefore argue that, whether located in a rural or urban setting, there is a need to reflect on whose interpretation of 'sustainable living' is being elevated and enacted through these types of initiatives, and how this relates to those individuals' social status, class, race, and gender (Dupuis and Goodman, 2005). Considering our observations within the context of the 'local turn' in policy, these case studies highlight the limitations of an instrumental view of communities as units ready to be mobilised to achieve policy objectives and point to the critical role of complex and nuanced local politics in the interpretation and implementation of such policy.

2. 'Incomers' and rural community life

It is argued that the "practices and performances of rural actors in material settings contribute to the production and reproduction of discourses of rurality" (Woods, 2010, p. 836), which, in turn contributes to a sense of belonging through a deep engagement with place (Northcott, 2015). Collective action and local collaboration have been fundamental to the sustainable management of natural resources throughout history. Whether via clan groups, grazing societies, youth clubs, or labour-exchanges, the social capital embedded within these types of community groups has been identified as vital for achieving fair and sustainable solutions to local development problems (Pretty and Ward, 2001). Over the past two centuries, however, rural populations in economically developed nations have "undergone something akin to a metaphorical rollercoaster" (Woods, 2005, p. 72). In the first half of the twentieth century, rural areas faced decades of mass depopulation at the hands of the industrial revolution, severely disrupting traditional practices and lifestyles, particularly in more remote communities (Stockdale, 2002; Skerratt *et al.*, 2012). Since the 1970s, rural depopulation has been tempered in North America, Australia, and Western Europe by 'counterurbanisation' (Woods, 2005). This reversal of the rural to urban migration flow led to population growth in many rural communities in the 1970s and 1980s, and remains a significant, although uneven, trend across the UK (Champion, 2005; Woods, 2005; Halfacree, 2008).

Although the reasons for pro-rural migration can be complex and diverse (Bosworth, 2010; Halfacree and Rivera, 2012), many of those living in cities are believed to be drawn to the countryside in search of the rural 'good life' (Murdoch, 2006), in which the pleasures of life can be enjoyed in a more socially and environmentally conscious way (Woods, 2011; Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014). This type of migration is arguably supported by the image perpetuated in popular culture of the 'rural idyll': the image of a "village community, complete with its strong ties of kinship, shared values and sense of belonging" (Garland and Chakraborti, 2006, p. 162). As Bosworth (2010) has discussed, in adopting this framing, rural in-migrants are assumed – or expected – to be pursuing cultural assimilation: seeking to inhabit similar ways of life to the existing residents, and consequently experience the benefits of rural community life. This interpretation of counterurbanisation as "a retreat from urban life" overlooks the possibility for rural in-migration also to reflect, to some extent, the "spread of urban lifestyles into rural areas" (Bosworth, 2010, p. 969).

Rural places have proved particularly appealing to the affluent, urban, middle classes looking for attractive places to live and work (Persson and Westholm, 1994; Smith and Phillips, 2001; Phillips, 2010; Milbourne, 2014). It has been suggested that members of the 'service class' (employed in professional, managerial and administrative occupations) have been especially drawn to rural places, partially on account of a particular predilection for the rural idyll, and partly because they have the capacity and opportunity to move their jobs to rural locations

(Cloke and Thrift, 1987; Woods, 2005). This arrival of 'white collar' professionals has been linked with significant inflows of entrepreneurial skills and capital (Newby, 1979; Stockdale, 2006; Bosworth, 2010). Bosworth and Atterton (2012) have highlighted the important role that in-migrants' networks can play in socioeconomic development in peripheral rural places: "in-migrant business owners maintain strong attachments to the extralocal and, through their business activity, they are able to embed the extralocal into the local" (p.273). Consequently, for rural places with dwindling populations and primary industries now in decline, repopulation via in-migration can offer opportunities for greater social and economic sustainability (Short and Stockdale, 1999).

Inevitably, migration, and the subsequent "recomposition of social classes in rural communities" (Woods, 2005, p. 84), is not a uniformly positive experience for either the migrants or the receiving rural communities. It has been suggested that the in-migrants who have a positive impact on socioeconomic development "make particular efforts to integrate with local communities" (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012, p. 273), but such attempts to blend into the existing social fabric of rural communities can be challenging for both sides (Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996). Affluent in-migrants may (inadvertently) adopt "a range of socio-cultural and political practices, which serve to reproduce and protect idyllic middle class images of the rural" (Smith and Phillips, 2001, p. 458), resulting in changes to local social institutions, cultural norms, and functions of rural places (Milbourne, 2014; Slee *et al.*, 2015). As Shucksmith (2012, pp.388-389) argues, drawing on observations of rural England by Murdoch (1995, p1221), rural places can therefore be "not simply a site of middle class colonisation but 'a favoured site for the processes of middle-class formation'". This can elicit a fear that the long-resident population, and their lifestyles, will be marginalised, and contributes to a persistent, and arguably self-perpetuating, discourse that categorises the 'incomer' as distinctly other to the 'local' (Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Burnett, 1998; Nimegeer and Farmer, 2016).

In the UK, tensions between 'incomers' and 'locals' have been particularly observed in rural Scotland, where communities still bear the scars of the mass evictions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Highland Clearances (Mackenzie, 1998), and "where incomers are sometimes explicitly vilified, as outsiders with imperialist aspirations to subjugate and destroy local lifestyles and culture" (Short and Stockdale, 1999, p. 177). During the 1960s, the pejorative term 'white settlers' emerged to refer to the rising number of urban out-migrants, often from England, moving to remote rural Scottish communities. Although understood to mean slightly different things to different people, the term is broadly associated with a sense of (re)colonisation and a concern that local cultures are under threat of domination from the incoming culture (Dickson, 1994; Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Watson, 2003).

Whilst, rhetorically, 'incomers' and 'locals' are commonly categorised as distinct identities, it is important to acknowledge that, in practice, the act of delineating the 'incomer' from the 'local' is complicated by the fact that they are mutable and subjective labels (Burnett, 1998). As Crow *et al* (2001) have demonstrated, the fundamental complication in the concept of an insider-outsider distinction is the inherent plurality of 'community'. An 'incomer' who may be considered an 'outsider' to the geographic community due to their lack of ancestral ties to that place, may, for example, be a very active member of a local social club, giving them 'insider' status within that community of interest. Masson (2007) highlights this point in her analysis of 'boundaries of belonging' in the Scottish Highlands, arguing that "not only do different people have different degrees of belonging, but that each individual has 'eclipsing' identities. For instance, in some contexts they will focus on genealogical 'roots', but at other times a sense of being in a place, and being committed to it, is at the forefront of belonging" (p.34). She argues that identity and belonging are consequently open concepts, influenced by the ongoing creation and recreation of knowledge and perpetual (re)negotiation of many different types of relationships. Similarly, Kiely et al (2005) discuss at length how the legitimacy of "claiming, attributing or receiving identities" (p.153) must be seen as a complex interplay between various (sometimes conflicting) factors, primarily "blood, birth, and belonging" (p.153). Kohn (2002) has suggested that, rather than discrete 'incomer' and 'local' categories, it is more fitting to consider an ever-evolving incomer-local continuum, with length of residence in the community just one of the factors determining a person's "incomerness" (p.144).

3. 'Incomers' and community-led sustainability transitions

Despite the superficiality and inconsistency of the labels of 'incomer' or 'local', there remains evidence to suggest that these labels are applied in practice, indicating perceived cultural differences between the two groups (Burnett, 1998). For example, Mackenzie (1998) provides a particularly compelling example of how, despite the contested boundaries between 'incomer' and 'local', the notion of a division between the desires and motivations of 'incomers' and those of 'locals' was effectively exploited to further commercial interests in a debate over a new superquarry in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. There are also several accounts that highlight that an observed difference between 'incomers' and 'locals' is their willingness to adopt leadership positions within local development projects. In Scottish Highland communities, Jedrej and Nuttal (1996) found that self-proclaimed 'incomers' felt compelled to take the lead on community-led projects due to a lack of willingness from 'local' people, resulting in a dominance of 'white settlers' within local development groups and committees (p.178). The same was also reported in a study of Stormay in Orkney, where Forsythe (1980) found that, since urban migrants had started arriving in Stormay, 'incomers' were disproportionately represented within the leadership of local organisations. There were divided opinions on why this was the case. For the 'locals', the migrants had taken over,

"pushing themselves forward while ignoring the talent of local people", whilst the 'incomers' stated that "the Orcadians are so indecisive and fearful of criticism that they are glad to have outsiders take the lead" (Forsythe 1980, p.297).

There are similar accounts from England. In 'Steeptown' on the Isle of Wight, Crow et al (2001) found broad agreement among interviewees that "in-migrants were more likely than locally born residents of Steeptown to be active in community-based organizations" (p.40). Again, the authors found there to be a lack of consensus about why this was the case, with some suggesting that 'incomers' were intrinsically more motivated to "get things done" (p.41), while others correlated it with the 'white settler' logic that 'incomers' move in and then want to change things. In their study of women and 'the rural idyll' in East Harptree, southwest England, Little and Austin (1996) found evidence of an incomer-local divide in terms of participation in – and enthusiasm for – certain activities. They observed that "the village hall or theatre was seen as being run by the 'newcomers' while the Village Club very definitely 'belonged' to the 'locals'" (p.108). They also found evidence that "it was the incomers who were the most fervent supporters of the traditional village activities and festivals" (Little and Austin 1996, p.108).

The observation that 'incomers' are disproportionally likely to be engaged in community leadership is arguably linked to the observation that (at least some) rural in-migrants may be actively seeking a particular, more community-orientated, lifestyle (Forsythe, 1980). Soper (2004, p. 115) has suggested that an awareness of the negative aspects of "their high-speed, work dominated, materialistic life-style, and… a sense that important pleasures are being lost or unrealised as a consequence of it" can serve to spur individuals to seek a change of lifestyle through counter-urban migration. This links to the discourse of sustainability, which typically challenges the notion that lifestyles which revolve around ever-increasing consumption and economic growth will make people happy, and calls for new understandings of 'the good life' (Christie and Nash, 1998). Furthermore, Woods (2005, p.86) suggests that 'service class' in-migrants are "well equipped for political activity, with high levels of education, good communication, organizational and other skills, spare time and money and – crucially – the motivation to defend their investment in the 'rural idyll'". This echoes loudly observations of participation in community-led sustainability projects within the Transition Town Network (TTN). Aiken (2012) has identified and discussed the striking similarity between the profile of members of these community-led sustainability groups and that of Mohan's (2011) 'civic core': typically, affluent, middle-aged, and well educated, these individuals were observed to be "well-resourced financially, educationally and with time" and, consequently, most able to participate in ambitious community-led projects (Aiken 2012, p.96).

The implication of Aiken's findings is that participation in local sustainability-orientated movements is classed. This observation has also been made more explicitly elsewhere, particularly in reference to local food movements. For example, in their review of research on food localism in the United States, DuPuis and Goodman (2005) highlight evidence that "local food system movement members tend to be white, middle-class consumers and that the movement threatens to be socially homogenized and exclusionary" (p.362). This is not to say that awareness of, or concern for, environmental issues is affiliated with class. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary. For example, in their study of the role of demographic variables in consumers' environmental attitudes and behaviours, Wells et al (2011, p.828) found that "consumers from across all social grades engage in some way with certain 'green' behaviours". As they go on to state, this finding "rather contradicts the frequently expressed view that environmental issues like climate change are 'middle class issues'". Moreover, as Agyeman (2008) highlights, the 'environmental justice' movement, which emerged in response to social inequalities in the distribution of environmental threats, has a very different membership: "Without wishing to essentialize, there is abundant research that characterizes the environmental sustainability movement as largely white, educated and middle class while the environmental justice movement is largely low-income, people of colour driven" (2008, pp.752-753).

Rather than being a reflection of increased concern for the environment, DuPuis et al (2006) link the tendency for local food initiatives to be disproportionately middle-class with 'perfectionist politics' and the privileged position of white middle-class consumers in influencing definitions of 'good food': "Ideas about 'good food' that are embedded in middle class, generally white, reformism (or 'social movements') […] propagate a notion of perfect food which denies the multiplicity of political interests behind the food system" (p.261). The same argument can also be applied to conceptions of 'the good life' and 'sustainable living' more broadly, which disproportionately reflect white middle-class interests due to their privileged access to, and power over, the political processes through which such norms are established.

There is a clear point of connection between the observation that middle-class incomers are disproportionately engaged in community-based organisations and the observation that the middle-class membership of local sustainability initiatives. Yet, to date, these two literatures have not been brought together. There has been no explicit investigation of a link between 'incomers' and leadership of community-led sustainability initiatives, and the implications for the rationale of community-based approaches to encouraging lifestyle change. In this paper, we address this gap through an examination of two communities in Scotland pursuing projects funded by the CCF.

4. The Climate Challenge Fund

Established in 2008, the CCF has gained substantial cross-party support as an important component of climate policy (Bolger and Allen, 2013). Through the scheme, funding is provided for community-led projects in Scotland aiming to reduce carbon emissions and create a sustainable legacy (Scottish Government, 2013). A wide range of projects have been supported, including: community gardens; education programmes; recycling collections; electric vehicle trials; and home energy audits. The Scottish Government argues that the CCF approach "empowers communities to deliver projects that are relevant to them and which leave a positive and sustainable legacy for the future". Successive reviews of the CCF (Brook Lyndhurst and Ecometrica, 2011; Hilliam *et al.*, 2015) have indicated that, whilst the scheme is facilitating action on climate change at the local level, the projects have often found it challenging to engage with community members who are not already interested in climate change. Most of the projects surveyed were found to be dependent on small teams of paid staff of between one and three people, and the characteristics and qualities of these staff members was an important element in the success of the projects (Brook Lyndhurst and Ecometrica, 2011). In this paper, we examine the extent to which 'incomer' and 'local' identities of community members and project staff have an influence on the way in which the project is delivered and received.

5. Case studies

The data in this paper was collected during two eight-week fieldwork periods in two remote rural locations, Corra and Gairdie[1]. In each case, the lead author volunteered full-time with a community-led organisation pursuing projects funded through the CCF, described below.

5.1 Corra Action Partnership

Corra is an island community of approximately 1300 individuals. Corra Action Partnership (CAP) was set up by a small group of residents who were motivated to act after attending a screening of an environmental awareness film. The community defined by CAP also includes adjacent isles, increasing the total target population to approximately 4500 individuals. CAP secured funding from the CCF to conduct various carbon-reduction projects, including vegetable growing trials and demonstrations, home energy audits and insulation tests, a district heating feasibility study, and a lift share scheme.

5.2 Greener Gairdie

Gairdie is a settlement of just over 2000 residents in the south of Scotland. Greener Gairdie (GG) began as a small, informal group of individuals that voluntarily pursued local environmental activities, including a small-scale can collection and recycling service. A few members of the group decided to establish GG and have been awarded funding from the CCF to carry out a range of projects, including recycling, energy efficiency, food growing, furniture restoration, garden sharing, and sustainability education.

6. Data collection and analysis

This research took an 'abductive' approach, which seeks to derive social scientific descriptions and explanations from the everyday activities, language, and meanings of social actors "by uncovering largely tacit, mutual knowledge and the symbolic meanings, motives, and rules that provide the orientations for their actions" (Blaikie, 2004, p2). Therefore, whilst the overarching aim of the research – to better understand how the local socio-political dynamics of placed-based communities affect community-led sustainability initiatives – was founded in existing academic literature, data collection was not designed to test any initial theory-based hypothesis. Instead, data collection was led by a desire to observe everyday life in CAP and GG, and to construct innovative theoretical insights based on these empirical observations, via "the cultivation of anomalous and surprising empirical findings against a background of multiple existing sociological theories" (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p169).

Data were primarily gathered through participant observation. During the two periods of fieldwork, the researcher volunteered on a variety of activities conducted by CAP and GG, including local information days, schools' events, gardening, and home energy audits. A considerable amount of both the groups' time was spent in the office, which, as well as providing the facilities for typical office activities, also functioned as a meeting space in both cases. This meant that both prearranged and unannounced visitors were quite frequent throughout the day, giving the researcher access to a wide variety of meetings and discussions, and to the more routine workings of the two organisations. Detailed ethnographic field notes were taken at the time of observation, or as soon after the observation as possible. An additional 'reflective field journal' entry was also made at the end of each day, in which the research would reflect back over the observations of the day, and identify theoretical links between observations, and with existing literature, which, in turn, guided the ongoing data collection process.

Towards the end of each study period, qualitative interviews were conducted to gather more in-depth data on some of the key themes that appeared to be emerging from the observations. In total, twenty local people with links to CAP and GG were interviewed, including, the groups' employees and members, the employees and board members of other local community-led groups, and Local Authority employees explicitly working on community or environmental issues. Interviews were unstructured, following a very loose interview guide based on the ongoing analysis and emerging concepts from the participant-observation, allowing the respondents a large degree of control over the direction of the conversation.

After the fieldwork, all interview recordings were transcribed in full and all handwritten field notes were typed up. Qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) was used to thematically

code these documents. A set of initial codes and loose themes had been identified from the ongoing iterative analysis conducted in the field. These were used to systematically code all the data and to create thematic links between the different data, and with existing literature, using thematic mapping. During this process of interpretation and categorisation, new codes emerged, and themes were revised and refined, until clear concepts had emerged.

In the analysis that follows, we begin by briefly discussing our observations of the relevance and influence of the concept of 'incomers' and 'locals' within the communities of Corra and Gairdie, before specifically exploring the way these dynamics played out within the two CCF groups. Drawing on these findings and analysis, we consider the broader implications that these observations may have for the outcomes of community-led sustainability initiatives.

7. Incomers and locals in Corra and Gairdie

In both Corra and Gairdie, the labels of 'incomer' and 'local' (or 'native') were used frequently by members of the community as a means of describing both themselves and others. Although there was a lack of clarity about how these categories were defined, the fact that the distinction existed was undeniable and uncontested. In addition to the distinct physical boundaries of the island, in Corra, the passing on of the local Gaelic language and culture, coupled with an ongoing historic 'blood tie' to the land through the inheritance of a family croft, provided readily apparent markers of a 'local' identity. Whilst cultural markers such as these are rarely sufficient for defining identities (Masson, 2007), they appeared to lend a degree of palpability to the distinction between a 'local' and an 'incomer'. For example, in an interview with Mary – who has single-handedly maintained her own croft on the island for the past nine years – the very first words she spoke were to identify herself as an 'incomer', indicating both the importance and endurance of this distinction to her, and a desire not to be seen to be misrepresenting herself as a 'local'.

It was clear from everyday conversation that, whilst most people in Corra recognised a distinction between 'incomers' and 'locals', by and large, this was not considered to have a negative effect on the community. Nobody suggested that they were opposed to people moving to the island, and nobody who had moved to Corra reported feeling unwelcome upon arrival. David, a Corra resident who had moved from Wales to take a local development job, suggested the incomer-local divide is a harmless and natural ubiquity of rural society that is no different from other rural places:

> *"I lived in Wales before I came here…it's not much different there.*
> *The locals who all went to school together all know each other and*
> *have their social circle and everyone else – they don't mix that much*
> *anyway. I don't think it's anything too unusual to be honest…. But*
> *there are- [pause] I would say the locals and the incomers do mix, but*
> *not all of them."*

David's observation that there are some 'incomers' and 'locals' who choose not to mix with each other socially was echoed in Gairdie. In an interview, Janet, a fifty-year-old resident, who was born in Gairdie and has never lived anywhere else, raised the issue of 'incomers':

> Janet: *"I don't think everybody knows me as much as they used to. Gairdie's got bigger."*
>
> Researcher: *"The population's got bigger?"*
>
> Janet: *"Aye, people moving in here. Down that way, there's a big housing estate and most of the people are not local."*
>
> Researcher: *"Oh really? Is it holiday homes, or people who have come to stay?"*
>
> Janet: *"No, it's people who have retired here from down south. The people next door to me come from Norwich."*
>
> Researcher: *"And do they get along in the community?"*
>
> Janet: *"Some of them do, some of them don't [...] I think some of them have got something to hide. That's what I reckon [...] People, you know, they don't speak. I was always brought up to speak to everybody I met on the street but that doesn't happen now. English people don't do that."*

<div align="right">Interview: Janet, Gairdie</div>

It is clear that Janet does not perceive the people she is speaking about, who have moved to Gairdie on retirement, to be 'local'. Her comments about the unfriendliness of English in-migrants support the argument that, in rural Scotland, a surge in English in-migration "has to some extent come to symbolize the negative popular perspective placed on social and cultural change associated with migration" (Short and Stockdale, 1999, p. 178). A clear example of this also emerged in an interview in Corra. Laura, who was born in Glasgow but had spent many summers working on the islands and had subsequently moved permanently to Corra, relayed an example of a rare experience of negativity she had faced from one person on the islands

> *"...one local person [...] once said to me, 'Ah, Sassenachs are coming up and taking all the jobs', you know, 'Mainlander coming and taking our jobs' [...] It is quite difficult because, I mean, that person really upset me"*

<div align="right">Interview: Laura, Corra</div>

'Sassenach' is derived from the word used by Gaelic speakers to refer to non-Gaelic speaking mainland Lowlanders (Scott, 2013). Although not necessarily used as an explicit term of abuse, as Scott states, "The assertion that 'this is our word for you (whether you like it or not)' is clearly a political statement" (2013, p.1). This experience is a classic example of the stereotypical conception of the "problem of incomers" described by Jedrej and Nuttall (1996, p.3), which attributes the disruption of traditional life and culture, including the unavailability of jobs and housing, to 'incomers', and tends to conflate 'incomers' and 'Sassenachs'. In the 1960s, as the number of English people living in Scotland was rising sharply, it was this perception of urban in-migrants that gave rise to the pejorative term 'white settlers' to refer to 'incomers' who were seen to be usurping positions and properties from 'locals' (Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Watson, 2003).

8. 'White settlers' and community-led action

The potential perception of 'incomers' as 'white settlers' was of particular relevance to both CAP and GG. Neither of CAP's two project managers, and only one of the seven members of the board of directors, was born in Corra; the vast majority of CAP board members and employees were originally from England. Similarly, in Gairdie, almost everyone involved in the founding and subsequent management of GG were in-migrants. The GG project manager himself suggested that the fact that they were considered 'incomers' might be part of the reason they had faced some hostility from some members of the community.

Even though it was apparent from the first few days of fieldwork in both locations that majority of people most actively involved in both groups were thought of as 'incomers', it was still shocking to the researcher when they were explicitly referred to as 'white settlers'. In Corra, Callum – a crofter with a long, strong family history in the islands and one of the two CAP employees considered a 'local' – described the members of the board as 'white settlers' during a conversation with the researcher about a new project. In Gairdie, Craig a gardener for GG (and a 'local') used the term when talking to the researcher about the GG allotment holders. It became clear that, for both Craig and Callum, what makes an 'incomer' a 'white settler' – and, by connotation, objectionable – is their ambition to change the local way of life or disrupt the status quo. This echoes previous ethnographic findings from northern Scotland: "The 'pushy' incomer who runs every committee and is seen to be 'taking over' often remains peripheral, sometimes shunned" (Masson, 2007, p.35).

This is a critical point for initiatives such as GG and CAP, which have been explicitly set up to encourage and facilitate local change and whose founding and management were very heavily influenced by individuals who were considered, by themselves and others, to be 'incomers'. Craig and Callum were both born locally and, in both cases, were amongst the most outspoken about 'incomers' of the residents encountered. It is perhaps surprising, given

their apparent resistance to the ambitions of the groups, that both Craig and Callum were employees of GG and CAP respectively. Callum and Craig both saw their CCF group's identity as 'incomers' as a limitation to the group's success and believed that their own personal involvement in the project – as 'locals' – had been essential in gaining local acceptance for the groups. Callum suggested that, before he and Emma (the only other Corra-born employee) had joined CAP, "nobody had even heard of [CAP]", and Craig made it clear that he had been vital to gaining the support and cooperation of other local people and businesses. He said that when he approached the local greengrocer about selling the vegetables grown in the GG garden she asked him if he was growing any himself – not through GG – that she could buy. Craig believed she viewed GG as 'white settlers' and that the only reason she agreed to sell the GG produce is because she knows Craig personally and he's a 'local'.

The specific term 'white settlers' was rarely heard during fieldwork, but the view that there were some people who moved in and tried to change things was echoed a number of times. In an interview in Corra, when talking about the future of life on the islands, Peter identified migration as a key determining factor:

> Peter: *"I've always said that a lot of people coming into the islands, they maybe visit the place, and they like the place so much they come and live [here], but then the first thing they try and do, once they arrive here, is to try and change it all [laughs]. Because then they say "why isn't the community doing this, and why isn't it doing that?" And then they try and change things and force the community down different roads. That's very prevalent."*

> Researcher: *"And is there a sense among local people that they're very against the idea of people coming in and trying to –"*

> Peter: *"They're not against people coming here, but they are against people trying to tell them how to live their lives, or how they could change their lives for the better [laughs], for their own good [laughs again] – which is not necessarily the case."*

<div align="right">Interview: Peter, Corra</div>

The suggestion that some 'incomers' try to "force the community down different roads" or are "trying to tell them [local people] how to live their lives" starkly reflects the previously discussed narratives of a fear of colonisation by in-migrants (Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996). The importance of 'incomers' making an effort to blend in, rather than try to change things, was frequently commented upon, particularly in Corra, for example, in an interview with Laura:

> *"I think it depends on the attitudes. A person could be here for donkeys' [years] and not seen as a local, and they've been here for 30*

years, most of their life or something. But I think what makes a difference is if you kind of blend into the community or if you make an absolute effort to be different. So if you go along with the way it is here and you don't fight against the way of living here then you're fine."

<div align="right">Interview: Laura, Corra</div>

This demonstrates the fluid and subjective application of the label of 'incomer', which is more or less likely to be attributed to in-migrants depending upon the way they behave. It supports the argument that, rather than being static, identity is socially constructed by the performance of "a complex set of behaviours, actions and labels which determine and are determined by our interactions with others" (Gill, 2005, p. 86). However, Laura's suggestion, that 'incomers' should try to "blend in" or "go along" rather than "fight against the way of living", was problematized within the same interview, when she explained that it was generally accepted that much of the positive community development work, such as that being done by GG and CAP, is usually pioneered by 'incomers' rather than 'locals':

"A lot of people do accept that most of the progress that's made here is actually incomers coming in and doing things, because lots of the locals won't actually go on community groups [...] If they stick their head up and go on a community group they immediately assume that they're going to get shot down for it. Whereas incomers are like, 'why would I care what anybody else says about me?' [laughs]."

<div align="right">Interview: Laura, Corra</div>

The suggestion that 'locals' shy away from community development issues was echoed in a subsequent interview with Emma, who has lived in Corra all her life. She suggested that some Corra residents liked to be able to defer to 'incomers' when it came to making decisions and pushing forward certain local issues:

"I think most people [born in Corra] like the fact that maybe people who move here notice things more that we've just grown to accept and we don't notice as much [...] I think we quite like it secretly when someone else is willing to fight our battle for us"

<div align="right">Interview: Emma, Corra</div>

This raises an apparent contradiction between, on one hand, an objection to 'incomers' coming in and telling 'locals' what to do, and on the other hand, an expectation that 'incomers' will be active in community development initiatives. It was evident that the many clubs and committees in Corra and Gairdie were unrepresentatively populated by 'incomers',

with a variety of possible explanations provided. In a discussion between some of the employees of CAP, it was suggested that active involvement in 'the community' is something that 'incomers' are seeking when they move to the island – they have often moved to the island for a certain way of life and go out of their way to get involved in community activities. Similarly, during an informal conversation between two GG employees and a Gairdie-based youth worker – all of whom identified themselves as 'incomers' – the presence of a divide within the community in terms of participation in community activities was linked to a division between 'incomers' and 'locals', and this was one of the few times that social class was explicitly referenced as a factor:

> *Gary said that he has noticed that it's always the same kind of people attending the youth things that go on, often the "lower classes" aren't that involved. Lizzy asked if he thought it was an incomer/local thing. He said maybe yes.... Sarah said that the locals often perceive things to be run by posh incomers and don't want their kids going along. Lizzy said that it is true that it is often incomers who are the ones who are doing these things...*

<div align="right">Research Diary, Gairdie</div>

This conversation revealed that a perceived class difference between 'incomers' and 'locals' may be playing an important role in the reluctance of 'locals' to participate in activities organised by "posh incomers". From observations and interviews, it was clear that those most actively involved in CAP and GG were predominantly well-educated, highly qualified, and relatively affluent in-migrants. The two project managers of CAP were a semi-retired architect and a former chartered accountant, and the project manager for GG formerly worked in national government, all typical examples of 'service class' occupations. All were university educated, as were the chairpersons and the majority of the directors of both organisations. Consequently, the potential (actual or perceived) class divide between those leading CAP and GG and much of the 'local' population may be further frustrating the logic of community-based initiatives seeking to encourage more sustainable lifestyles.

9. Discussion and Conclusion

The case studies presented here serve to highlight the critical influence of local micro-politics in attempts to encourage lifestyle change through community-based projects, and questions at least part of the rationale for enlisting community groups as vehicle or arena for promoting lifestyle change.

Our observations in both Corra and Gairdie support previous findings that 'incomer' and 'local' identities remain pervasive and apparent subdivisions within rural communities in Scotland (Forsythe, 1980; Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Burnett, 1998; Short and Stockdale,

1999). Whilst we found very little evidence in either location of a general resistance towards people moving in to either Corra or Gairdie, these 'incomer' and 'local' labels were frequently used, and the 'incomer' identity was often observed to be associated with a more vocal approach to community development issues and a desire for local change. There was some degree of acceptance, particularly in Corra, that it was inevitable that 'incomers' would take a leadership role in community initiatives, and the ability of 'incomers' to identify and actively drive forward opportunities was occasionally identified as a positive contribution to local development.

This expectation was realised in the composition of both CAP and GG, which were both set up and managed by highly qualified, affluent individuals who were considered 'incomers' locally. If, as previous research has suggested, middle class rural in-migrants are not only disproportionally likely to be engaged in community activity (Forsythe, 1980; Woods, 2005), but may also be particularly sympathetic to the sustainability movement (Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014), it is perhaps unsurprising that rural community-led environmental sustainability organisations such as CAP and GG would be heavily populated by 'incomers'. This does, however, have potential consequences for initiatives seeking to encourage lifestyle change. For some 'local' community members, there was a perception that some 'incomers' had moved in and were trying to change the way of life. This elicited direct and indirect connotation with the notion of the 'white settler', a controversial term with a deeply negative implications of cultural domination and enforced societal change (Dickson, 1994; Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996; Watson, 2003). There was an expectation that new arrivals to the community should attempt to blend in with the existing way of life, echoing previous observations that the rural in-migrants who make particular efforts to integrate themselves within the existing social fabric tend to have the most positive impact on socioeconomic development (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012).

A large part of the rationale behind policy to encourage community-led low carbon initiatives assumes that community based organisations can act as 'trusted intermediaries', communicating messages and encouraging lifestyle changes locally (Taylor Aiken et al 2017). These organisations provide a means through which individuals can act on climate change in a way that is relevant and meaningful to their local contexts (Macnaghten, 2003). These community groups are also expected to influence practices and lifestyles by adjusting local social norms (Peters and Jackson, 2008). Our observations have identified, however, that there is a persistent perception of difference between 'incomers' by 'locals', which is likely to frustrate this logic within Corra and Gairdie. If members of the community do not affiliate themselves with the individuals communicating the messages, or enacting the norms, this diminishes the 'power of community' that has been observed in this context (Middlemiss, 2011).

Sociocultural distance between 'locals' and 'incomers' can also be reinforced through the (conscious or unconscious) behaviours and lifestyle choices of in-migrants. Smith and Phillips (2001) have suggested that, for some middle class rural in-migrants, "the pursuit of a 'new found' identity, belonging and status often involves the preservation of a social and cultural distance between themselves and the local population" (p.458). This, they argue, can lead 'incomers' to strategically adopt activities and lifestyles that differentiate themselves from 'local' ways of life that conflict with their own rural imaginaries. Cloke and Goodwin (1992) have made similar observations, noting that middle class rural in-migrants have "used their power to pursue their own sectional interests which represent very particular ideologies of what rural community and development should be like" (p.328). Using this framing, the incomer-dominated CCF groups in Corra and Gairdie may be interpreted as a means of legitimising middle-class incomers' desire to instate their vision as the right way of living, and to enforce these 'better' lifestyles on the wider local population.

These findings strongly echo previous observations of the tendency for community-based sustainability initiatives to be "largely white, educated and middle class" (Agyeman, 2010, p.753), which Dupuis and Goodman (2005) argue is rooted in a history of "middle class reform movements bent on 'improvement'" (p.362), imbued with narrow assumptions about the 'right' or 'perfect' way to live. It is naïve, therefore, to assume that environmental localism or community-based sustainability action is apolitical or post-political. As Kenis and Mathijs (2014) argue, it is not possible to remove politics from these types of initiatives: "Repressing the political or rendering it invisible does not make it disappear… If the political is repressed, it threatens to come back with a vengeance" (p.181).

This presents a complex sociocultural context for government policy to encourage sustainable lifestyles at the community level. Partial participation is arguably unavoidable in community-led action and is a fundamental flaw of mechanisms of public participation in governance (McAreavey, 2009). Previous authors have highlighted the inevitable tendency of community-led initiatives being dominated by those who have the personal and financial resources to participate (Aiken, 2012; Creamer, 2015), and it is difficult to deny the effectiveness of middle-class reform movements (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005). As McAreavey (2009) has argued, however, "If an elite group operate within an invited space and purport to represent broader interests, it is entirely misleading to set up these structures and systems of governance and claim that they are acting wholly in the real interests of the community" (p.323). This raises significant questions about the legitimacy of the claims that initiatives such as those funded by the CCF are community-led. Specifically, if self-identified members of the community that a 'community-led' project has been set up to represent perceive the project to be largely controlled by individuals that they do not consider 'locals',

questions may arise over the authority of this group to speak 'in the name of the community' (Rose, 1996).

The research presented in this paper has focused on the influence of 'incomer' and 'local' identities on the efficacy of community-led initiatives to engender more sustainable lifestyles. These challenges may be more clearly apparent in rural communities than urban communities, where the boundaries of community are often starker, and are perhaps particularly critical in remote rural Scotland, where the legacy of the 'white settler' endures in the collective consciousness of much of the long-resident community. Nevertheless, there are much broader implications of these observations for how we think about community-led sustainability transitions, particularly in terms of those initiatives that seek to encourage certain ways of living. 'Community' can be "invoked in epistemologically different narratives of sustainability" (Mackenzie, 2001, p.234). As DuPuis and Goodman (2005) argue, there is a need for much greater reflection on whose conception of 'the right way to live' is being privileged and universalised through 'community-led' initiatives, and the relationship with class, race, and gender politics. There is clear scope for further research to examine these issues within other communities, particularly within an urban context, where identity, belonging and community are likely to be interpreted and enacted differently.

Notes

1. The names of all people, places, and institutions are pseudonyms.

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