SACRED GREENSPACE IN THE SOUTH WALES' VALLEYS

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Abstract

There has been considerable interest into the sustainability of the UK's parks due to the beneficial impacts these spaces have on people's wellbeing, to connect with the environment and deliver everyday community functions. It examines how a community is engaging with its local neighbourhood park, largely exploring to which sites and features in the park the community identify as sacred. The research focuses upon community engagement in relation to Darran Park, located in the post-industrial town of Ferndale, South Wales. The area has experienced social and economic changes during the twentieth century, largely due to its transition into a post-industrial landscape, and today is an area of social, physical and cultural uniqueness. The study utilises the sacred place model, to explore the deeper and overlooked place attachments the local community have to their park. It uncovers the story of Darran Park, from its origins and history, to its current challenges and budget cuts that threaten its future sustainability. It finds that the policy, language and the discourse of greenspace in Wales has evolved since the inception of Darran Park, but the need to connect and escape to the natural environment has remained a focus for Ferndale's community.

<u>Dedication</u>

I would first and foremost like to thank both Suzanne and Angharad for the endless support and guidance they have given me throughout all my studies, and for also making this an enjoyable, rewarding and diverse experience! I would also like to thank my parents and grandparents for the financial help and encouragement they have provided me during my time at university. I would like to thank Ray and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council for the additional information provided to me. Additionally, thank you to all the residents of Ferndale who have participated in my study. Finally, I would like to thank Harry, for putting up with me for the last 5 years and for being a great peer during both my undergraduate and postgraduate study!

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Aim and Objectives

This study seeks to explore the different ways in which Ferndale, South Wales' community

engage with their local neighbourhood park, Darran Park (Image 1), as a precursor to the

wider engagement process.[1]

The objectives that underpin this aim include:

- Utilising Hester's (1985) understanding of sacred structures within a place
  and community

- Gathering memories, stories and reflections on Darran Park from the local
  community

- Considering the current and future challenges for Darran Park and thinking
  about sustainable solutions to secure its future.

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[1] The original aim was to consider the challenges Darran Park faced, but the study evolved to first explore how the community engaged with the space before considering the future challenges of Darran Park in general.

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1. Introduction

Neighbourhood parks are established as everyday experiential places, with a multitude of functions and meanings. Jacobs (1961) notes that "you can neither lie to a neighbourhood park, nor reason with it" (Jacobs, 1961:101), noting that parks are genuine places, presenting opportunities of rootedness and depicting a community's foundation. The study is underpinned with geographies of place attachment, the idea that individuals begin to construct emotional attachments to certain places and develop relationships with them (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Parks may support ideas of place attachment through the social, environment and cultural narratives they present, and the enthusiasm that these spaces produce. Due to the potentially personal and significant place attachments that arise from parks, the research will explore in more detail the idea of sacred place, as a place that people share special connections to. These ideas are particularly pertinent to Ferndale, a geographically unique post-industrial community situated in the South Wales' valleys, with a strong local culture and a community that has seen vast transformations during the twentieth century due to its transition to a post-industrial landscape.

Image 1 - A panoramic of Darran Park, including the central lake and main thoroughfare (Lambourne, 2016).

The British park has become a space of economic uncertainty and political contestation (Neal, 2013). The global economic recession in 2008 and the increasing financial pressures on local authorities have had negative effects upon the British economy during the early twenty-first century. Since the 2010 election of the British Coalition Government between the Conservative and Liberal Democrats parties, and subsequent re-election of the Conservative Party in 2015, budget reforms, potential local authority mergers in Wales and austerity has affected funding for everyday public services. Neal (2013) identifies that policy reforms and austerity present a need for new and innovative management practices of British greenspace, as way to ensure the future sustainability of these spaces. For such processes to take shape, studies must first consider and explore how communities are interacting and engaging with local neighbourhood parks.

Community engagement is a practice that balances the top-down authorities of governments and planners with the general perspective of the everyday user of a place, as a way to understand how a community interacts and uses a space (Collie, 2011). Community engagement is now embedded both academically and politically within Welsh, UK and European development policies, as a way of creating holistic and sustainable communities. Politically, community engagement is now actively encouraged in the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) borough (the region in which Ferndale is situated), through the council's 'Involving People' (2013) initiative. Involving People (2013) is a holistic framework for the area, to actively encourage the public to engage in the decision-making process which ultimately impacts on everyday experiences of place. The initiative seeks to encourage partnerships towards public engagement; supports engagement as central to business and partner organisations throughout the RCT borough; promotes the advertising of community engagement to the widest possible audience and ensures the communication of RCT's

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shared community goals more efficiently (Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Board, 2012). Involving People (2013) ultimately interconnects the principles of participation and engagement with Welsh national policy surrounding wellbeing. Furthermore, it enforces the idea of sacred place, by proposing that places have worth to communities, and it is important to engage the community in them.

At a national level, Welsh policy is now focused around the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations' Act (2014). This act is part of the Welsh Government's mission to create a holistic and sustainable Wales. The act requires local authorities to ensure sustainable wellbeing goals are implemented in every local authority in Wales by 2020. One guiding principle within the concept of sustainable development is that of human, environmental and social wellbeing. According to Lachowycz (2013), parks and greenspaces are places of wellbeing, which combines the health, enjoyment and happiness of local communities. Dinnie et al. (2013) continues that wellbeing is less about physical and mental illness, and instead simply an overall measure of feeling good and functioning well. This coincides with identified greenspace functions, paving the way for social, economic and environmental benefits of neighbourhood parks. Dinnie et al. (2013) raise the importance between the designation of open greenspace, and the concept of wellbeing, as parks are spaces that can positively support and promote social, physical and mental health.

This study will explore community engagement in relation to place attachment, as a way of setting out what functions individuals or groups use Darran Park for, how the community feel about the space and how the park supports their levels of wellbeing. In a sense, the study is uncovering what the park has been used for previously, what it is currently being used for and how this will affect its future. This shares ideas with a scoping study, which is a

study that acts as a precursor to a full systematic review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The feasibility, relevance and potential costs of undertaking a long-term endeavour should be considered during a scoping study. To explore a scope for community engagement in Darran Park, sacred sites will be identified by the community. This idea derives from the 1985 study 'Subconscious Landscapes of the Heart', undertaken by landscape architect Randolph Hester. Hester (1985) focused upon Manteo, North Carolina, a town that experienced industrial decline during the 1970s, and used the identification of sacred sites to a place as a focus for development and investment. Hester (1985) notes the process "[enabled] residents to identify and preserve valued lifestyles and landscapes in the face of change" (Hester, 1985:10). It is anticipated that through identifying sites of place attachment through sacred sites within Darran Park, individual and collective meanings of the park will be uncovered.

Hester (1985) found that by identifying sacred sites in Manteo, development was sensitive, supportive and reflective of the local culture and community dynamic. This research will transfer this idea through identifying place attachment to Darran Park. Through understanding culture "we could suggest that 'cultural life' - or that which eventually gets called 'culture' - is in part the mediation of production and consumption within everyday life" (Mitchell, 1995:110). This implicit link between 'the everyday' and culture supports the neighbourhood park as cultural asset, as an everyday public space where community functions can take place. Therefore, the type of community engagement in Darran Park will be reflective of Ferndale's local cultural dynamic, with the research continually reinforcing ideas of culture in relation to Ferndale's and the wider South Wales' valleys.

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This study applies Hester's (1985) model on the smaller scale or 'micro-place' of the British Park. The formation and designation of place is largely focused upon notions of meaning, dwelling and belonging (Tuan, 1977). The concept of place attachment is to be explored in-depth, to recognise the different connections and bonds that place evokes with individuals. Tuan (1975) identifies that place itself is a space that has been socially assigned a meaning. Meaning can shape everyday interactions with places, very simply, if an individual likes or dislikes a place, feels safe or fearful in a place or feels anger or hurt by a place, this will all contribute to the way in which they engage and interact with it. These ideas can be transferred to Darran Park, as a park can have many different functions, purposes and meanings for a community and the individuals which use it. A park may begin to stimulate people's sense of place and how an individual can simultaneously become emotionally attached to it through experience and meanings (Agnew, 1987a). Therefore, to understand community engagement in Darran Park, it is pertinent to understand what constitutes ideas of place in Ferndale.

Ferndale and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) are now governed by Welsh policies regarding wellbeing and sustainable development. Wales has put in place a wealth of policy, and may be suggested as a leading nation in the acceptance, adoption and delivery of sustainable development and wellbeing in the EU and globally. The discourse of community engagement and participation has evolved and impacted both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. However, to achieve effective community engagement is somewhat convoluted, and a community or place must first be explored to foresee the potential for community engagement in its current state. To scope the potential for community engagement enables a clear, definable outcome, to understand where the community is in its current state and where it needs to be to achieve its goals. Examining

the scope for community engagement in Darran Park supports the economic and social sustainability of the park and embeds the political and academic focus of wellbeing and community engagement in British communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding a Sacred Geography

The understanding of the term 'sacred' has evolved and changed over time. Traditionally, sacredness has been implied as a religious entity, whereby individuals and communities have shared a central ideology to religious sites and faiths. Tse (2013) notes that geographers have focused much less on religion itself, and instead its associated functions that impact the interaction of people, places and everyday experiences. Historically, Britain has undergone numerous processes that have altered its position as simply understanding sacred in terms of a religious connection to the church, notably the eighteenth century 'Age of Enlightenment', whereby scientific theories had greater influence in society; the rise in capitalism and the new 'capitalist religion' with the dominance of money, technology and wealth over more symbolic and religious ideals (Deutschmann, 2001). Therefore, sacredness as an idea can be explored as a deep and dynamic term, and has paved way for geographical study through exploring people's perceptions as to why they view certain places as important and special. 'Sacred' may be understood through a place's story and memories, where people have formed connections to a place and identify that place as being sacred. Hester (1985) supports these ideas, by suggesting that sacred places have always had a social dimension, and that this social dimension can be used to understand the deeper meanings of people and places. This chapter will explore how sacredness can be viewed in a social and secular way, and how this may impact upon a number of geographical ideas.

Agnew (1987a) suggests place can be given three clear distinctions, place as a *location*, *locale* or a *sense of place*. As a location, place may be a clear point in space, outlined geographically. Furthermore, relationships and meanings that are presented within a place

can be depicted through its location. In terms of a locale, place can create and instil its own vernacular, and distinct features that may begin to define a space. Agnew's (1987a) identified 'sense of place' relates to Tuan's (1975) work, where place is created through the assigning of a meaning, and is a largely personal and unconscious entity. Broadly speaking, place can be defined by both its tangible and intangible features, for example a park may be identified by its green and natural physical qualities, but also through more personal understandings and connections. Sense of place as a concept has created a disparate set of academic ideas, due to the understanding, scale and subjectivity surrounding the concept. It relates to identifiable characteristics of place that allow individuals to begin to develop socially constructed knowledge of how a place operates. Shamsuddin and Ujang (2008) continue that for individuals to develop a personal sense of place there is a required physical element. This physical element is simply produced by way of activity within a space and the associated meanings. However to develop a sense of place, an individual does not need significant identification with a place, or to have resided or spent a substantial amount of time within it. Instead, a sense of place is dynamic and it can change and evolve depending on experience and perceptions.

Medieval understandings of sacred places found that these spaces where separate from general and everyday space (Hayes, 2003) and were defined, clear and special points that had a sense of meaning and purpose to a certain group or community. Sacred space shares roots with Durkheim's approach to understanding society as being divided into separate spheres of religious life, which had to be away from profane existence. These earlier ideas of sacredness correlate with earlier understandings of 'community', as something that shares a sphere or collective identity. Tonnies' (1957) understanding of 'Gemeinschaft', argues that shared ties, bonds, interactions, values, norms and beliefs within a group of people create

community. Community, therefore, is not fixed or set, but dynamic and changing, and sacred spaces give communities focal points of worship or engagement to enact these shared norms and belief systems.

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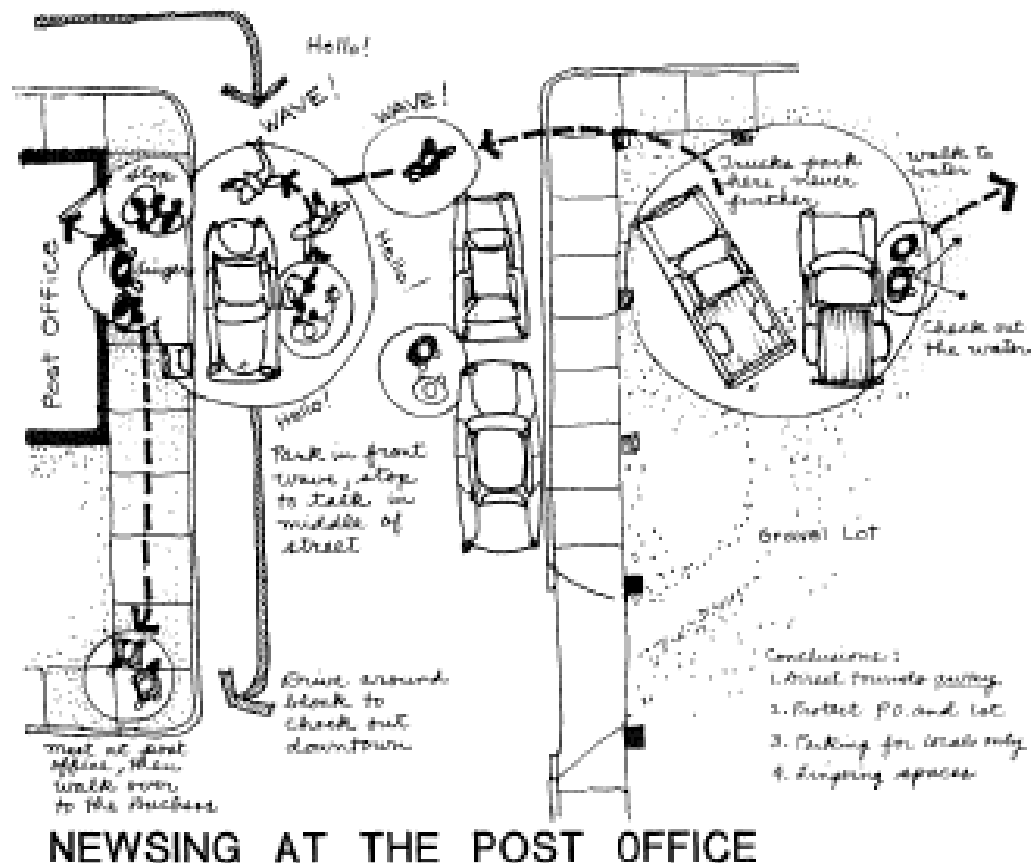
Figure 1 - Identifying sites of community interaction in Manteo. (Hester, 1985).

To succeed these earlier ideas of sacred places as spaces of religious worship or pilgrimage, geographers can view sacred space as sites of connection between humans and certain spaces that provide special functions. An example of these 'special places', Selman (2012) would argue, are spaces with natural functions, allowing people to connect with what they

understand as 'nature'. Historically, the idea of a sacred place has been entrenched within subjectivity and bound within a religious context, sharing individual and group associations and stories to historic sites of symbolism. When applying the term sacred, definition becomes problematic to conceptualise (della Dora, 2011). It is important to depict sacredness at different scales to represent the broadness of the idea, for this research sacred is explored simply within the park. della Dora (2011) discusses a sacred space, affirming the concept as a general space, with potentially little boundary or definable territory, ultimately a general space of meaning. However, by terming these sites of sacredness 'sacred space', it implies a certain level of vagueness surrounding the concept. Lane (2002) continues that to develop a framework of the sacred place, the story of the individuals and communities residing in that place play a dominant role in socially constructing it. Story plays a role in Darran Park, as a space which is not vague, and does have social, cultural and environmental symbolic meanings.

Carmicheal et al. (1994) identify that there are universal understandings of the meaning of sacredness. It is the religious community where the term sacred has deep rooted singular or collective symbolic meanings. Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) reiterate the need to incorporate religious components in understanding place, continuing that sacred space is often marginalised, minimised and even ignored due to the conflicting nature of these places. This idea is transferable to greenspace, with identified social and economic issues that have marginalised and impacted on parks and management throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) identify that although there has been significant work into the exploration of sacred sites as significant places that affect human lives, study is lacking by way of demonstrating place attachment between individuals and these spaces of sacredness. Furthermore, sacredness fosters a sense of place through

shaping people's moods and motivations, to be reflective, impact on an individual's self-confidence and allow people to feel empathetic. However, this emphasis on religion has altered, particularly due to society's secularisation and focus upon an economic or capitalist religion (Deutschmann, 2001). This suggests that British society has connected with other sacred forms, and religion is no longer the most dominant.

Social elements can be drawn from the religious connotations of the term sacred, as a way of utilising the personal, physical, and emotional from the term's more traditional understanding. Hester (1985) provides a bounded model of sacredness, by emphasising the importance of 'sacred structures' to place. These structures are simply sites or features within a place that the community identify as sacred. The concept of place often implies ideas of insiderness, which parallels the etymology of sacredness. Although a sacred space implies strong meaning, it does not enable us to pinpoint place attributes as sacred and in turn depict a space as being sacred. Hester's (1985) study, based in Manteo, North Carolina, identifies the town as suffering at the hands of industrial decline, the hollowing-out of tourism and increasing levels of deprivation and unemployment. Hester, a community developer and landscape architect, was initially commissioned to "develop a plan that would bring new economic purpose and prosperity to the town, yet not sacrifice traditional lifestyles and valued landscapes" (Hester, 1993:271). It is this traditional lifestyle that reiterates the sense of self and identity, understand, situate and identify with a place.

The study involved a process of identifying important aspects to the town and in turn exploring how these assets were 'sacred' to the community. To do this, Hester used participant observation to identify spaces in Manteo where daily usage patterns occurred in the community, for example visiting the local post office or shop. The activities in these

spaces were observed, from body language, gestures and social interactions (Figure 1). Hester (1985) argues that these activities imply the space is 'sacred', as it begins to forge community. After mapping these spaces of community interaction, Hester (1985) found that the research touched a 'subconscious nerve', whereby a collective view of vital space in the town could be visualised. The research has established the notion of sacred space and the involvement of attachment and bonds with place and landscape (Tuan, 1975; Lane, 2002; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). Hester's work was a process of uncovering intricate place attributes that are particularly familiar and identifiable to the community members residing in that place.

Hester (1993) suggested that by situating knowledge internally within the community of Manteo, conscious and subconscious differences were much easier to interpret. Hester (1993) found this hypothesis to be correct, through surveying the local community's perception of what structures were sacred in Manteo, and carrying out the same survey under self-hypnosis, to establish underlying or subconscious attachments. This has been supported more recently with regards to sustainable development policy surrounding deeper community knowledge to inform political development (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). People's understanding of a place differs when they begin to disclose subconscious, personal and private attachments, as there are certain attachments that until recovered, may be completely unknown to the individual and therefore to the wider community. This demonstrates that community views of sacred place may conflict with outsider views, and to some extent even within the community, as a result of these hidden attachments and emotions surrounding the place for certain individuals. This was uncovered as result of insular and even anonymous subconscious attachments to place.

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One way of identifying many of these unknown attachments that create sacred place is through story, "without exception, the sacred place is the place rich in story" (Lane, 2002:15). Lane's identification of a story develops an understanding of that place through its narrative, through its social history and memory. Not only can a story be first hand, emotive and enjoyable, it is also deeply informative. A storied sense of place, place attachment or experience may imply a link to social history, with members sharing knowledge to instil the values associated with a place. Lane (2002) identifies that some of the Earth's oldest stories surround the concept of place, and without a story, a place cannot be sacred. Drawing upon the process of storytelling to a place once again reinforces the importance of meaning and place attachment for sacred place. Hester (1985) was simply uncovering Manteo's hidden story to reverse its state of decline.

This storied perception allows communities to utilise local social and collective memory, which is particularly significant in identifying both attachments and *sacred attributes* to place. Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) argue that the study of social memory is no longer bound to psychologists, instead it has integral responsibility for cultural geographers. White (1987) terms the narrative as being 'transcultural', a way of portraying the knowing through telling. This presents a story as something with greater substance, as a knowledge transfer or a piece of metadata, which can be later interpreted and retold. However, as with any piece of data, a story can have inaccuracies or be misinterpreted, and this misrepresentation can lead to inaccurate place narratives. Therefore, geographers must scrutinise the narrative of the story, to relate it to real historical proceedings within a place. Sacred place will have evolved as a social and physical construction, both aspects influenced by the story of that place and therefore memory. Social memory indulges deeper than a

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historic text, it is the foundation of numerous generations existence within a place, a way of shaping a locale and the sense of the local community.

Stories and memory can be contentious, and are often misrepresented, due to different views and resulting conflicts. There are often contrasting views on what is understood as 'sacred place', and there are global conflicts surrounding its designation. Chidester and Linenthal (1995) raise awareness of multiple global contestations of a sacred space, arguing "the sacred irrupted, manifested, or appeared in certain places, causing them to become powerful centres of meaningful worlds" (Chidester and Linenthal, 1995:6). Chidester and Linenthal (1995) give reference to conflict and war over sacred space; however, the principles of sacred place within a social framework have the potential to induce community unease. Once again, the notion of sacred space can move more into both social, environmental and cultural memories and power. Parks in particular can be identified as sites of this new understanding of sacred, or this new connection people and society. Selman (2012) suggests that the interaction of people and parks is a dominant societal trend and consideration must be given for human values to ecosystems and greenspace. This suggests that sacred has shifted further, succeeded even the dominance of capitalism and economics, into a connection between people and nature, or communities and perceived natural environments, created through power and memory.

Sacred place as a theoretical concept is now pertinent to policy at both a British and Welsh level. Although direct development policies and directives do not overtly promote the idea of sacred place, there is an acceptance that individuals are integral in the creation of sustainable communities. Craig et al. (2004) argue that to strengthen local communities, it is the community that should play a crucial part in the development of social, economic and

environmental wellbeing policy. Community development relies on the willingness and cohesiveness of a community to engage in community spaces. It is the bottom up method of development, whereby information is presented internally and informs policy, rather than central policy informing distinct local community dynamic. In terms of the idea of sacredness, community development may present an opportunity for the community to present and enhance the sacred features to a place, which in turn may strengthen the place's narrative and the wider understanding of that place in terms of how to move forward and develop.

Lane (2001) summaries that "above all else, sacred place is 'storied place', particular locales come to be recognised as sacred because of the stories that are told about them" (Lane, 2001:65). This interestingly frames sacred place as something of a mundane and everyday nature. People can be producing stories through everyday lived experiences, with narratives impacting on a sense of place and resulting in strong attachments to that place. Complementing the religious connotation of sacred spaces, geographers can begin to decipher the intricate nature of the facets to a sacred place that seduce people into the very attachment to place. Culturally, 'sacred' may continue to have a religious dimension, but it has also evolved geographically into something more secular, a bond between individuals and special characteristics, features and sites. Economically, sacred can be thought through the rise in capitalism and the dominance and centrality of money and wealth to society, and finally, environmentally, sacred is thought as a process of social-ecological reconnection, whereby individuals want to connect with natural space. Therefore, sacred place in essence is a strong relationship between community place attachment and the need to connect with a landscape that provides contemporary, essential and unique community functions.

2.2 Contemporary Place Attachments: Emotions and Bonds

Place resonates meaning that may encourage spirituality and symbolism, and in turn bonds between an individual and place arise. It is from this basic and simplified understanding of place, and the constitution of a sense of place, that emotional and psychological attachments can begin to be explored as a significant attribute in the study between people and immediate or surrounding place. Thrift (2003) identifies that place is a connection between space, meaning and embodiment. Embodiment is the process of immersion or sensory experience that forges a place attachment. This identifiable subjective nature of the idea of place enables geographers to study people's emotions and the implications emotions have on everyday lives. Smith (2009) suggests that emotional attitudes are particularly important for geographers, as it is the emotions that shape everyday behaviours, people's sense of place and attachment to place. One particular emphasis of place is the emotional bond or attachment people may develop with that place. Initially the role of place attachment can be explored as a social phenomenon, and yet the study of natural space and human interaction has developed a need for a philosophical understanding of the bond between humans and natural places. This chapter explores the relationship and scales between place attachment and human emotions, with a particular emphasis of the bond between people and nature.

The consideration of a scale to the notion of place needs to be developed, to demonstrate that place attachment can be formed at different stages and sacred place can share huge variations in its physical and emotional designation. Tuan (1977) suggests care and emotions shape the boundaries of a place, refraining from defining place as simply a geometric entity. However, this does not consider the presence of a wall, a hedge, or other physical

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boundaries that can help to define a place, for example a neighbourhood park. A physical boundary has the capability to shape people's emotions, in terms of fear, safety or simply as a reference point. These ideas transfer to greenspace, thinking about where a park begins and where it ends, and if the park's location is static or much broader in its emotional boundary. A place can bridge the emotional and the physical, to form a unique 'micro-place'. This 'micro-place' may simply be a singular place with a specific designation, whether that be a town or a city, a place within a place. A park is a good example of this, a space that has meaning and boundaries, yet on a much smaller scale than what is usually thought as place. Thrift (2003) continues that a place can be simply a space of embodiment, where everyday actions may occur, and again parks may be an example of a unique site of place attachment, as a space that meets contemporary societal needs through a connection with cognitive and physical experiences.

This recognition of an environmental attachment is bound to ideas of the emotions and emotional bonds between people, nature and greenspace. Smith (2009) argues that many geographical studies lack an emotional stance, and the study should be widely underwritten into the discipline, particularly regarding the study of place attachment. Davidson et al., (2007) emulates these ideas, stating that "the discipline of geography often presents us with an emotionally barren terrain, a world devoid of passion, spaces ordered solely by rational principles" (Davidson, et al., 2007:1). This suggests that by utilising the study of emotional geographies, it enables a construct of people's emotional involvement to a place, whilst simultaneously establishing how different individuals, groups or even societies are affected personally by place.

Place attachment is a concept that has the potential to be considered at different scales, depending on what individual or group the attachment derives from. Place attachment was originally explored as a sociological idea, identifying places that are conducive to attachment and examining the consequences to an individual if there were no attachments to society (Gearson, et al., 1977). Gearson et al., (1977) adopt a two-fold approach to understanding how people are attached to place; firstly that attachment to place is not uniform, it is a commitment to social involvement within a particular place, and the subjective feelings that are personally constructed as an outcome of this involvement. Secondly, people will attach to place if it presents personal opportunity or familiarities to what are perceived as 'home places'. Analysis of this two tier model has the potential for a tangible or intangible attachment to place. Social involvement is an empirical approach to understanding attachment to a particular place. Involvement in a place may impact upon an individual's social wellbeing, or experiential attributes associated with the practise of involvement. In contrast, personal opportunity may indeed relate to economic gain or resource availability, and therefore clear physical outcomes may be associated with attachment.

Technological advances since Gearson's study have changed society and ultimately developed new ideas of what constitutes place and how academics seek to define it. Massey (2004) argues that people can now operate on a 'global sense of place', whereby globalisation has created a homogenous planet, with new spaces of interaction and engagement. Furthermore, Harvey (1989) identifies that we have experienced and are continually experiencing, a world no longer limited by disconnections. This connected world, through advances in transportation, online spaces and education may suggest multiple attachments to place, not limited to a person's locale, or indeed the neighbourhood in

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which people reside. Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) further develop the notion of place attachment, arguing that it can be both a tangible or intangible entity, characterised by social and physical dimensions. A common perception of place attachment relates to the subjective nature associated with defining place. However, this so called connection has in essence, Selman (2009) would argue, had a negative impact between community engagement in greenspace, with a decline in use and centrality to community, and a need to reconnect social-ecological ties.

Relationships and meaning are commonly applied as dominant attributes to the concept, and a strong emphasis on the psychological bond between people and place. Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) argue that the need for study into physical environments is pertinent to understanding place attachment. The study examines people's attachment to the home, neighbourhood and the city. Altman and Low (1992) underpin the ideas associated with people, place and bonds, suggesting that it is the physical environment that both shapes and stimulates people to psychologically connect with place. A bond and its connotations will differ depending on the geographic location, sense of place and particular community that it is created by. Furthermore, identifying with a space or place as 'home' may evoke the idea of rootedness through the lived experience, with significant temporal aspects influencing the attachment process and therefore strengthen the bond between people and place (Vitek & Jackson, 1996; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). However, Hidalgo & Hernández (2001) oppose the typical stance and argue that current academic theory surrounding the concept is largely focused on attachment to individual neighbourhoods or geographical community, which in the twenty-first century is not a realistic perspective. Migration, travel, and multiculturalism have enabled people to develop attachments to new places, outside of this traditional neighbourhood setting. This parallels Massey's (2004) justification of a global

sense of place, suggesting place as a homogenised concept, and therefore can be universally applied and accepted.

The study of attachment to parks is largely central to experience and attachment to British National Parks (Ramkissoon, et al., 2012). A national park and neighbourhood park share similar and different characteristics, however the genuine attachment is arguably applicable for both spaces. Ramkissoon et al. (2012) propose an 'attitude-behaviour approach' to understanding the connection or bond between and individual and a greenspace. A park promotes certain behaviours that in turn suggest attachment, with particular reference to pro-environmental behaviour within a park. Individual's behaviour becomes reflective of the space, to preserve its 'place satisfaction', traditionalist bucolic ideals and the general symbolic nature of the space. Tuan (1974) supports this depiction of the park of a place of attachment, by suggesting that human attachment is initially created through nature and natural space. Although the questionable theory of a 'natural space' raises strong debate, particularly with what is understood as 'natural', parks generally emulates ideas of nature through rurality, tranquility and general 'openness'.

The attachment between individuals, communities and greenspace can continue through the social engagement aspect that can be developed in the park setting. It not only affects individual behaviours within the space itself, but the behaviour and opportunity for other community members using the park. Thompson (2002) introduces the notion that parks are places of human wellbeing through simply connecting with nature and interact with others. Parks may be considered mundane but also fluid, where human interactions may simply be 'the everyday', or are unwitting and new, dependent on different social, temporal and cultural factors that influence the use and designation of the park itself. There are a wealth

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of new spaces of engagement between social groups, particularly through technological advancements and the 'information age'. However, Thompson (2002) maintains that it is the human interaction within an open space that will connect people to local networks. Facebook, Twitter and Skype are a pivotal development for long distance relations, but the role of a computer screen in local human interaction can undoubtedly be questioned. For everyday leisurely activity, the park allows the development of a community sense of belonging, whilst delivering mental and emotional benefits through face-to-face interaction.

In terms of an environmental attachment to greenspace, Tuan (1974) promotes a link between nature and the process of becoming attached to place, by suggesting that natural places invoke a great sense of meaning. Furthermore, the lived experience has been a dominant force in understanding people's interaction within a place. Philosophers have sought to develop the understanding of the overlooked bond between people and natural places. Whitt el al. (2001) argue that environmental philosophy is the relationship between the human and non-human world, terming it a 'genealogical bond'. Genealogies provide a story of an origin, providing individuals with a sense of self enabling the feeling of being rooted both personally and spatially. It is the philosophy of the environmental world whereby people connect to the earth, or quite simply, designating certain human behaviours, functions and meanings to certain natural environments. The park is understood as a natural setting, where numerous human behaviours can be situated. This bond therefore is a relationship between what presents itself as a natural stage and humans simply use this stage for a certain function.

There is a broad academic interest in understanding how to produce place attachment, and in turn, the implications of people developing personal and emotional attachments based

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on meaning, a development of a local sense of place or community involvement within that place. It is important to recognise that a sense of place and place attachment share similarities, emotions and attachment to space, but the entities must be clearly separate. Sense of place is an initial and continual perception, but place attachment, a product of these identified 'bonds', whereby people and places are attached through these personal attributes to place. Bonds have been demonstrated as a current entity between individuals and as a metaphysical force that encourages the philosophy and story of the environment. This reflects Lane's (2002) identification of a 'natural story', human beings would not have a sense of self or a sense of place without an association with nature. Although the park is proposed as a manmade place, the natural 'feeling' of a park enables the bond between the park itself and the community it to which it belongs.

2.3 Greenspace and Wellbeing

Wellbeing is the notion of individuals feeling healthy and well in a community (Dinnie, et al., 2013). Greenspace studies across the UK and Europe are no longer static within a singular discipline and instead the worth of the study has evolved to both the natural and physical understandings of the world (James, et al., 2009). The geography and planning of a greenspace is a singular perspective that can be both influencing and influenced with other disciplinary findings. The park as an entity plays a role in the development of a sense of place, and therefore has the potential to form significant place attachment for individuals, groups or the wider community. This association between nature, experience and attachment has been of continued interest through the examination of the role between parks and the potential effects upon overall community wellbeing (Dinnie, et al., 2013). The timeline of British greenspace continually recognises the process of social and environmental wellbeing, not as overtly understood as the concept in the twenty-first century, but through previous directives and policies that share a similar ethos but through different language.

There was a strong philanthropic history of parks and open space in Britain during the 1889-1913 town planning movement (Meller, 2007). This period saw mass industrialisation taking place throughout the Western world. Philanthropists at the time were inspired by Frederick Le Play, who recognised the connection between human behaviour and the environment. Mass industrialisation was therefore a detriment to this connection, with less emphasis being placed on the importance of greenspace and more on industrial and economic growth. Parks were seen as a way of combatting this growth, to ensure that communities still had access to high quality open greenspace, and were able to stay connected with

nature. Again, during the nineteenth century in America, there was a similar identification of a connection between people and open, natural space. This was predominantly through Olmsted and Vaux's New York City plan, 'Greensward' (Eisenman, 2013), which saw the creation of Central Park. This was often referred to as the 'lungs of the city', and had two main functions, to secure pure wholesome air for the community, and to create a space which explicitly contrasted with the city's streets, to have a positive impact on individual's minds and imagination.

During the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, there have been many growth and redevelopment strategies in the UK, to evolve or reconfigure greenspace, in an attempt to maintain this earlier thinking of a proposed human need to be connected with natural space. The processes include but are not limited to, the rise of Victorian municipal parks, the Garden City Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century and more recently, the 1980s privatisation of public parks (Gordon and Shirley, 2003). These policies all loosely identify that the park plays a central role to many communities in terms of wellbeing, and therefore becomes a place of integrity and respect. The latter part of the twentieth century saw an increase in levels of neglect in British parks', largely through the downturn in maintenance and an increase in the levels of vandalism and crime (Conway, 2000). Predominantly under Margaret Thatcher's government during the 1980s, parks began a process of decentralisation and a delegation of management to businesses and contractors. Prior to this, parks had a staff presence and on-site management, but with privatisation, staffing levels decreased and large numbers of parks were left largely unattended. Since this inception, Conway (2000) notes that parks have generally seen a spiral of decline, with increases in vandalism, decay and general neglect in these spaces. This

has seen negative impacts for the processes surrounding what is today understood as wellbeing.

The initiation of the Urban Task Force's 'Urban Renaissance' (1999) meant parks once again experienced a process of overhaul or reinvigoration. Funding from government, charities and businesses enabled urban greenspace to enhance the desolate outlook adopted in the latter twentieth century. Since 2008, the UK has suffered economic depression, with the global recession pressuring the UK's already unstable economy. Current austerity has resulted in cuts to funding of discretionary services, or 'non-essential' services (Peter Neal Consulting et al., 2014). This again detracts from the original foundations of parks as a way for people and communities to connect with natural space. Rethinking Parks (2013) aims to explore new ways that greenspaces can be better managed for the future sustainability of towns and cities across Britain. The report's visionary nature introduces an innovative stance to the future management of parks. It largely focuses upon economic sustainability, by exploring new models of management in the twenty-first century. Neal (2013) focuses upon formalising community management strategies, to empower local people through their involvement of neighbourhood parks.

As a result of changing values and a shift in lifestyle during the twenty-first century, the role of British parks and public greenspace has evolved. According to Thompson (2002), the British population can now demand new functions from urban open spaces, due to a modernisation in lifestyles, value systems, attitudes and nature awareness. Across the past century, parks have been seen as key to the urban framework, places of escapism, of greenery, of tranquility. Conway (1991) argues "parks made an important contribution to the urban environment, developing within a social, economic and political context which

profoundly affected people's attitudes towards recreation" (Conway, 1991:5). These original value systems have seen resurgence, with people once again reconnecting with the natural environment (Selman, 2012). Pincetl and Gearin (2005) term this another 'historic evolution', a new phase in the lifecycle of British greenspace. In terms of creating greenspaces where wellbeing is sustainable, these identified 'historic evolutions' need to retain the original values of the neighbourhood park as a space of connection, where community can have a foundation for rootedness, engagement, activity and a connection with natural space.

Wellbeing is termed a social phenomenon, understood as a process that "involves documenting attributes seen as predictive of this ideal state of the self" (Pandelli & Tipa, 2007:446). Therefore, wellbeing is simply a state of feeling socially, physically and mentally well. This identification of parks as *places of wellbeing* correlates to the principles of sacred place, as spaces of strong symbolism that demand integrity. Whilst embracing societal changes, the role of government is to ensure that the neighbourhood park continues to provide key elements of wellbeing agendas. North (2011) argues that the British Coalition government's contentious 'Big Society' policy encourages empowerment, involvement, and local networking, in an attempt to support local community through social action and entrepreneurialism. This focus upon community as an insular entity has the potential to encourage grassroots development within British parks. This formation of sacred greenspace has the potential to follow an inclusive sustainable wellbeing strategy for community greenspace. However, the lack of policy directly focused on neighbourhood parks coinciding with large funding cuts (Neal, 2013), suggests that the greenspace may be compromised. For community engagement to deliver strong sustainable greenspace that continually benefits wellbeing, barriers to participation and engagement must be addressed.

Thompson et al. (2012) suggest that investment and sustainability should be considered by planners, to ensure parks can provide long term impacts for the provision of essential benefits to the community. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act was introduced in 2014 by the Welsh Government and made law in April 2015. The strategy considers social, economic and environmental sustainability in an equal measure by delivering revised principles outlined in the Brundtland Report (1987) to Wales. A particular emphasis of the act is the adoption of a personal and community approach to sustainability. Local authorities throughout Wales are required to produce wellbeing strategies to effectively implement the act's seven goals at a regional level. The wellbeing goals include 'a healthier Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities and a resilient Wales'. These goals are particularly appropriate to the provision of neighbourhood greenspace. Welsh Government (2014) continues that the emphasis upon community development needs to be strengthened, particularly through the 'Wales We Want' scheme, to give a voice to previously unheard communities. This has the potential for the Welsh Government to empower communities at new levels and initiate a sustainable Wales, socially, economically and environmentally. However, the viability of these acts must be considered, particularly due to the South Wales' valleys economy. Although holistic, to implement such goals requires capital, planning and time. In terms of establishing 'sacred greenspace' that continues to provide special and unique community functions, it is important to explore previous park uses and policies to support future notions in terms of greenspace development and sustainability.

The British Park has demonstrated continual dynamism, in terms of investment in political interest, evolution of functions and importance of these spaces to neighbouring community members. Parks have seen a timeline in development, from the ambitious ideals of the Garden City and the *greening* or urban environments, to simply becoming spaces of

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wellbeing and interaction. This 'timeline' has met contestations, largely through the management, functions and significance of the park within a landscape and society, the need for reform has continually reshaped how the park is to meet its future needs (Thompson, 2002). Whilst this study is centrally concerned with the discourse of place (Tuan, 1975; Hester, 1985; Agnew, 1987; Cresswell, 2004), the park inevitably portrays these notions, through the meaning that a park can contain. Parks have a story, function and share a strong community narrative, which in turn has the potential to designate the neighbourhood park a strong asset to communities and an arena that forges place attachment. The need for greater direction for the future of greenspace is necessary to once again enable a reconnection between society and nature, and ultimately secure sites for human wellbeing.

3. The Post-Industrial Landscape of South Wales

The research focuses upon Ferndale, a town located within the Rhondda Fach Valley. The South Wales' valleys are geographically distinctive, both economically, socially, physically and culturally. A pivotal point in the area's history can be identified during the 1850s, with the discovery of coal deposits in South Wales which altered this previously sparsely populated region (Wanhill, 2000). The growth in industry was vast, widespread and rapid, with metal-processing and coal mining South Wales' principal industry, as well as establishing Cardiff as the largest coal port in the world. The industrial development of South Wales has resulted in many social consequences for the area, and had particular effects on the community's wellbeing. Richard Llewellyn's 1941 novel 'How Green was My Valley' depicts the story of the area during the late nineteenth century, as a passionate community, intertwined with the dominant industrial landscape. Although highlighting the darker side to the industry itself and the poor quality of life for many workers in South Wales, literature during the early twentieth century generally depicts the area as tight-knit and tells a story of a area with a strong and ascribed identity. Although the valleys are now a post-industrial landscape, social and physical remnants of the industry and its impact remain, and are preserved through the unique landscape setting.

South Wales' coal mining industry went through numerous processes and changes, with its foundation as a basic and even subsistence usage between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. Subsequent growth of the copper industry during the seventeenth century and the iron industry during the mid-eighteenth century meant the need and demand for coal grew rapidly. Raw materials were brought to South Wales for smelting due to the large coal deposits in the region, putting Wales at the forefront of industry throughout Britain. Egan (1992) notes that the region did not start selling coal to the masses until around 1840, when

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a surplus from smelting began to generate extra income for the industry. Many new industries were using the raw material particularly in France, Ireland and Britain, and South Wales' industry grew to reflect the growth in demand. This growth in 'sale-coal' continued into the twentieth century, and by 1914, Cardiff was the largest coal mining port in the world. Ferndale was an industrial powerhouse within the valleys during the coal era, namely through its vast colliery, a nine pit mine, which during the time, was the main source of income and employment for the surrounding area. During this period, Ferndale experienced mass in-migration of workers from across Britain, with the Rhondda Valley's population increasing from 88,351 in 1891 to 152,798 in 1911.

The establishment of the coalmining industry paved the way for many new service provisions for South Wales. These were predominantly due to the rising population as well as an effort to improve public quality of life. Furthermore, wider society during the early twentieth century was experiencing a philanthropic influence, particularly with regards to incorporating aspects of sociability and wellbeing into towns and cities throughout Britain (Meller, 2007). In South Wales, these services ranged from libraries, workmen's clubs and cafes to parks. Some of these facilities were funded directly from the mines and mining organisations themselves, for example the Ferndale and Blaenllechau Workmen's Hall, set up after negotiations between the public and coal owners (Egan, 1992). Although these services were not directly referred to in the language in which they are now understood, essentially they were developed to provide workers with services to enhance wellbeing. During this time, miners were generally working in poor and dark conditions, therefore, these services were alleviating some of these day-to-day pressures. Furthermore, the South Wales' valleys were economically secure, with a stable economy and income from the exportation of raw materials to elsewhere in the UK and globally. Finances were available to

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support such developments, and the growth of services to wellbeing across South Wales was rapid.

Throughout the coalmining history, there have been numerous conflicts surrounding the treatment and pay of miners. Origins of strikes in Ferndale date to 1871, when coal owners dropped wages by 10% in an effort to encourage miners to leave the Amalgamated Association of Miners[2], which lead to strikes and conflicts in the town. 139 men, 29 women and 15 boys were transported to Ferndale from Cornwall and Yorkshire to fulfil the duties of the striking miners, which further exacerbated conflicts and disputes (Lewis, 1963). Strikes continued throughout the twentieth century, with the most notable in 1984/1985 during the height of Thatcherism. These strikes give a strong sense of community pride throughout South Wales and particularly in its post-industrial communities. Ferndale, the Rhondda and the wider Welsh valleys during these times established a strong sense of unity. Although controversial, the miners' strike demonstrated that the valleys command a presence, and have the capacity to cause political tension and global recognition (Francis, 2009). The miners' strike included a spectrum of the community, with women, families and officials protesting for rights that were thought to be essential to the community.

The miners' strike coincided with the decline the coalmining industry was facing throughout the region. Peak production of the coal industry was between 1910-1920, with around 60 million tons of coal produced each year (Egan, 1992). This period was succeeded with a decrease in jobs, with a loss of 50% by 1936. This was largely due to societal change, with new raw materials such as oil found to be more effective, quicker to extract and cheaper. This was further intensified with geological technicalities that made the South Wales

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[2] The Amalgamated Association in Miners was a centralised mining union offering support to local miners throughout the UK.

coalfield a more difficult environment to mine. The decline continued, with the remaining colliery's closing during the late twentieth century. This began a reshaping and restructuring of the valleys into a new landscape, physically and socially scarred by it industrial heritage. Parry (2003) identified a process of social differentiation, whereby South Wales' broad collective narrative altered. Communities had to be reconfigured and redefined to continue, with a wide spectrum of men retiring and hidden unemployment rising.

Today, the South Wales' valleys experience economic uncertainty, largely associated with the downturn in industry, low employment rate and geographical isolation from nearby powerhouse, Cardiff. Local authorities such as RCTCBC are unable to sustain these traditional facilities in the valleys,

"Traditionally associated with high levels of employment, coalmining has experienced declining employment and decreased long-term employment. The South Wales' valleys provide a particularly interesting example of this trend, the near elimination of the coalmining industry having given way to a more mixed, less prosperous economy" (Parry, 2003:228)

Parry's identification of a downturn in industry and economic prosperity is significantly applicable to Ferndale's economy. The Multiple Index of Welsh Deprivation (2014) finds Ferndale to be placed on the lower tier of economic development in Wales, with higher levels of unemployment than the average Welsh town. James et al. (2006) identified that RCT as a borough suffers some of Wales' highest levels of poverty, with a lower life expectancy, poor educational attainment and high unemployment.

Due to Welsh and European economic disparities, Wales receives £2billion in European Structural Funds, with the South Wales' valleys designated under the 'West Wales and the

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Valleys Programme', to secure growth and support job security (WEFO, 2015). The funding begin in 2014 and will continue until 2020. Such initiatives are designed to invest in sustaining Welsh community's social, economic and environmental needs. However, Williams and Thomas (2004) outline the issues the Welsh Assembly Government[3] have in delivering economically sustainable policies to the country's diverse population, particularly by the conflicting nature of what 'sustainably' means as a policy and concept. Therefore, investment into Ferndale and the wider South Wales' Valleys since the mining collapse has been largely unsuccessful in terms of meeting European legislation surrounding socially sustainable communities. Furthermore, Ferndale, like many other South Wales communities has a strong and unique local culture. Arguably, this makes very linear economic policy difficult to implement through a top-down method, as the town's strong community dynamic has not been harboured and considered whilst planning its future economic development.

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[3] The Welsh Government was established in 1999 as the Welsh Assembly Government, and was renamed as the Welsh Government under the Wales Act, 2014.

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Image 2 - Lake Street neighbouring the park (Lambourne, 2016)

Geographically, the Rhondda Fach valley is both distinctive and isolated. When defining

Ferndale, it may neither be considered an urban or rural landscape, rather lacking clarity in

how definition may be given within traditional classifications, with small urban pockets

eclipsed and defined by the steep rural topography. The South Wales' valleys are an

anomaly in British hinterland locations, due to the regional geology, design, heritage and

culture (Parry, 2003). Image 2 shows the rows of terrace houses that generally reflect

stereotypical inner city environments, due to the dense nature of the linear streets and

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lacking diversity in building design. In this instance, Ferndale is an outstanding example of this uniqueness, it is not a traditional British village setting, neither a town of endless streets and squares, but instead a community defined by the unique landscape, and particularly, how this landscape was beneficial to economic gain. In this instance, Ferndale is a stark contrasting place of urban density and remnants of productive rurality (Image 3), a defined place of uniqueness within the British landscape. Academically, parks appear to fall within two categories, the urban or civic park, or the national or country park. Darran Park falls into neither category, and at present is largely absent from academic literature.

Image 3 - A panoramic view of Ferndale from Darran Park (Lambourne, 2016).

The landscape is now post-industrial and is generally reflective of the physical and social remnants the industry has left behind. These factors present the South Wales' valleys as a landscape of unique economic, social and cultural identity, and a strong geographical distinctiveness in Britain and globally. This unique interaction and cultural distinctiveness returns to ideas of a sacred landscape, whereby place attachments are shaped through connections with contemporary and dynamic functions. Ferndale as a community shares strong ideas with Hester's (1985) study of Manteo, as a landscape altered by its shift to a

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post-industrial landscape. In contrast, nearby Cardiff has grown in economic and political power, and has been a focus for Welsh Government funding and large development projects. However, Francis (2009) indicates that former links with industry, a unique landscape and strong local vernacular have prevented the valleys from simply becoming a 'Greater Cardiff'.

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4. Methodology

Hester (1985) argues that to consider future development of a place, the origins, history and story must first be uncovered and understood. More recent arguments surrounding sustainable development underpin this idea, suggesting that a place cannot move forward in a sustainable way until its origins are fully understood (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). This is a process of uncovering Darran Park's sacred sites through understanding its current and previous functions. The study takes on two clear strands, the mapping of sacred sites within Darran Park and the subsequent gathering of stories and information to understand why these certain features are socially sacred to the community of Ferndale. Geographically, these two strands to the research reinforce one another, to explore the social and spatial characteristics of sacred sites to the park. The research is utilised as a scoping study, providing evidence of the community's wants and needs of Darran Park and ensuring the park fits with these more hidden and socially sacred needs.

The first part of this research involves the mapping of Darran Park's sacred sites (Appendix 1a & 1b). This process was undertaken in Ferndale during a 5 day period, when participants were asked to 'plot' a site or location in Darran Park to which they were most attached. This was succeeded with three words that explained why the participant was attached to this site or location. Whilst this shares ideas from Hester's study, this study involves more of a surveying technique, and less a simple participant observation, which enables the gathering of participant's permission and contact details for potential follow up interviews. The mapping of sacred sites and locations to a place supports Cosgrove's (1989) argument, that to visualise something is to make it real. This is the case in Ferndale, to draw social and emotional interactions between people and place and to make them quantifiable, and in

turn make data that can be viewed rather than simply thought or heard. In Ferndale, the study utilises these previously discussed ideas to map sacred sites in Darran Park.

The maps of sacred sites to the park were correlated and the plots were amalgamated using an Edina Digimap base map and editing software to create a cohesive map reflective of the connections between people and contemporary features in the park. 'Heart' symbols are used to emulate those in the original study, and reflect the idea of love towards the sacred sites in the park. After the creation of this singular map, analysis of the data allows a consideration of Ferndale's community attachments to the park, exploring if there are groups or 'clusters' of sacred sites in the space. The research is holistic, ensuring that temporal changes are included in the data, with data collection held during the morning, afternoon and evening periods in the park. This initial method seeks to eliminate researcher influence and bias, by surveying participants at the park's entrance points as opposed to any 'hotspots' or popular sites within the park itself.

During the research process, this study focuses upon language such as 'attachment', 'unique sites' and 'special sites' to uncover the sacred sites to Darran Park. Although the ethos of sacred place underpins the research, and the attachment to a specific feature or site in the park is explored, Hester's terminology remains somewhat confusing and not fit for purpose in Ferndale's community. Polkinghorne (2005) proposes that language is a fundamental issue during the research process, arguing that "despite the problems involved in transforming human life experiences into language, language is our primary access to people's experiences" (Polkinghorne, 2005:139). This implies that the process of language is complex, and a considerable tool to be used, but the degree to which certain language is used will need consideration for the strongest outcome during research. As previously

outlined, the term 'sacred' has a strong religious dimension. However, sacredness is not being used in a religious manner, rather as an exploration between people and special sites. Hester's study was focused upon American society during the 1980s, a contrast with twenty-first century British society, which has seen the evolution of secularity (Brown, 2006). To overtly imply to participants the research is exploring the potential for engagement in sacred sites may perpetuate participant distrust as well as imply that the research is promoting a certain religious stance.
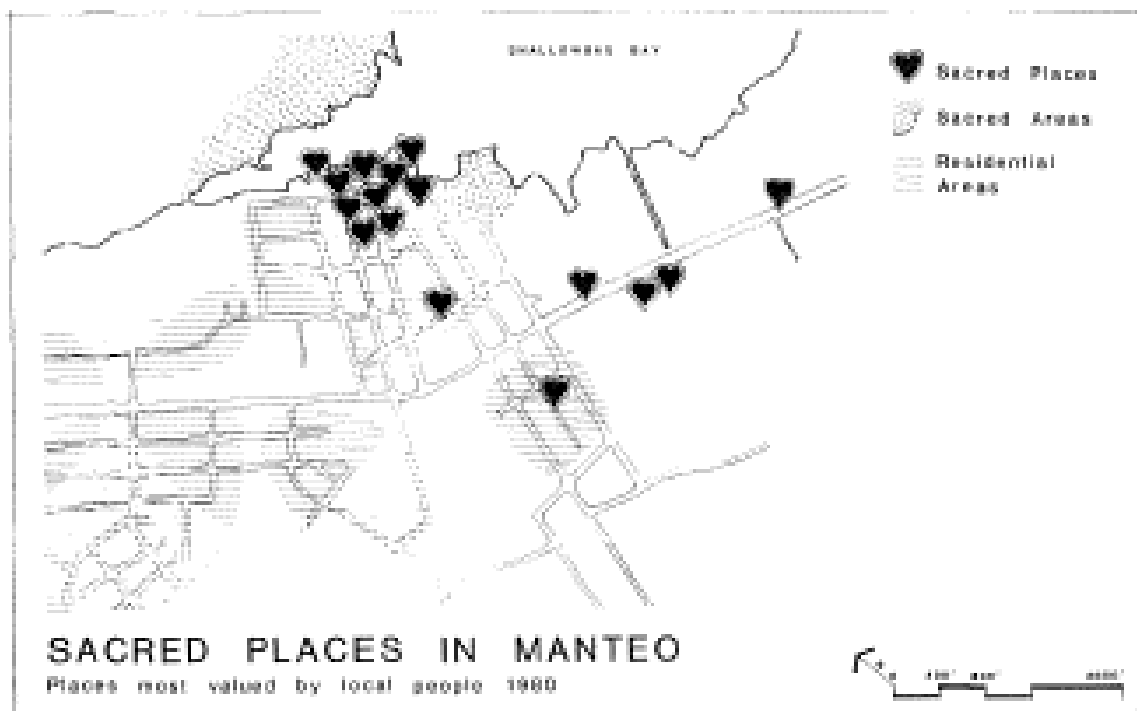
Figure 2 - Sacred mapping in Manteo (Hester, 1985).

Hester's (1985) model has be tailored in a more geographical and contemporary way, to ensure that it is examining community engagement in places to reflect more current thinking surrounding both sustainable development and the geography of the emotions. Figure 1 (Chapter 2.1) demonstrates the link of the emotional and personal data with landscape protection law and designation. This study moves away from this designation

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process, instead focusing on the geography of place and community. Landscapes can be understood simply through their physical presence, on the premise that they can be simply assessed due to physical and tangible factors. However, geography succeeds this ocularcentric ideal, incorporating ideas of emotional attachment into place, space and landscape. Hester (1985) encompasses these ideas, but with a greater focus towards community in a broader sense. The original study concentrated on ideas of community planning strategies for future tourist development and securing a sustainable economy. This begins to lean the original study towards the physical elements of place, without the consideration of other emotional experiences that form place attachment.

This research is a scoping study for community engagement in Ferndale, with a focus upon Darran Park. A scoping study in essence is the process of determining the value and viability of commissioning a systematic review in some way, whether that is research or development (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). A scoping study output can, therefore, provide solutions for wider issues surrounding a particular area, in this case the feasibility of community engagement in Darran Park, Ferndale. Dalby and Mackenzie (1997) identify that many approaches to community development are unsuccessful because they simply implement a generic participation model and policies that ignore specific community or place attributes. Instead, consideration into a community's social, economic and political dynamic must underpin the participation process. This idea is integral to this research methodology, it uses best practice from Hester's study and incorporates more recent academic thinking and language to make the model applicable to Ferndale. The South Wales' valleys share similarities with Manteo at the time of study, with identified industrial decline, a struggling economy and social deprivation, the economic and social outlook for the valleys is uncertain (WEFO, 2015). Implementing 'Subconscious Landscapes of the Heart'

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as a strategy will be used to pinpoint and map community-identified sacred attributes to place.

One consideration when undertaking a scoping study is the accessibility of the community in relation to outside individuals and researchers. Hester (2013) suggests the period of preparation or 'trial-and-error' leading up to development is integral for a project's sustainability, to ensure that sufficient knowledge and expertise surrounding place is gathered and successful relationships are forged between researchers and participants. This implies that a study of this nature is examining the social and spatial preconditions for development. Raco & Flint (2001) argue that governments must establish cohesion between national and local agencies, communities and individuals. However, place is often a barrier to this, impacting on the degree of relations needed between a community and an authority, due to historic socio-political factors. This is particularly pertinent in Ferndale, where there has been a strong political disconnect as a result of the closure of industry in the area and the feeling that the communities have been 'let down' by policy makers.

Due to this idea of political distrust, researcher positionality was considered throughout the study, and identified at times as a barrier to the research as participants stated they were "not comfortable with talking to researchers" or people they were unfamiliar with[4]. To overcome this, (and similar to Hester's (1985) study), the first half of the project was spent familiarising the researcher with the place and community and individuals and groups within the community. This helped to build a rapport with the researcher and community, outline the aims, objectives and outcomes of the research project, whilst breaking down the pre-exsting barriers that exist between the community and authorities in the area.

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[4] The researcher's background is English, and originally joined the University of Glamorgan (now University of South Wales) in Pontypridd in 2011.

To support the mapping element to the research, a number of qualitative initiatives are utilised to establish a more in-depth vision into the community's interaction with Darran Park. The first method is an online survey (Appendix 2), which considers the general use of the space as a result of the data shown on the map. It takes into account the community dynamics and wants and needs from the space, to identify why certain areas of the park are used and utilised compared to others. The survey was posted to an online social media group containing over 1500 community members of Ferndale, with 148 responses. It was also advertised using a dedicated Twitter feed for the project (Appendix 3). The research also undertakes 5 in-depth unstructured interviews, asking participants to simply tell their story of the park, to unpick what special and sacred features or attributes the park contains. The interviews are inclusive and were gathered through a number of local community groups in the library and the park. The main aim of these techniques is to support the mapping element to the data, by linking the participant's stories with the plotted 'sacred sites' to gain a robust dataset.

A further perspective on Darran Park is gained through undertaking an interview with the local authority to gain an alternative view of the space. Fischer (2005) argues that participatory projects need political support from the initiation, for both technicalities and the use of hard data. This idea was originally embedded in Manteo, and proved successful to its outcome. Consequently, this research utilises a link with RCTCBC[5] as a driver of knowledge transfer, communication and facilities for both the project and to sustain the ethos of the project for future generations in Ferndale. Potentially, this identifies the need for a top-down influence and may detract from the bottom-up grassroots nature to which

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[5] This is a partnership between Geography at the University of South Wales and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to facilitate a number of projects for students within local communities.

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participatory research is focused. However, the methodology ensures the community voice is heard through the use of unstructured, informal participant-led research techniques. A further political support is the Welsh Government's approach to sustainable development policy. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) emphasises the importance of community in the development process in Wales, and the ethos of a holistic and integrated approach when developing at a local authority level.

The process of community participation assists partnership working and wider engagement. Davis (2002) promotes partnership working as "pre-existing institutional structures impose rigidity on partnership interaction that severely constrains innovation" (Davis, 2002:201). Not only does this highlight a barrier in the community partnership process, but also relates partnerships to institutional structures. However, the process of participatory working dissolves these pre-constructed intuitional structures, enabling flexibility and fluidity in the research project, as well as a new social dynamic within the research itself. The project takes into account that RCTCBC has to manage not only a diverse population, but a large population of approximately 234,410 (ONS, 2011), which inevitably forms numerous structures, exclusions and inequalities. The hope of participatory work is to break down the barrier between authority and local people, whilst identifying and conserving the unique sacred attributes to Darran Park. Furthermore, partnership working is beneficial to Ferndale in a sense that it can provide opportunities for skill attainment, education and enjoyment from the park, to enhance and utilise one of Ferndale's key community spaces.

The final consideration when undertaking this research is the ethical factor that must be adhered to in participatory research, and in particular, when asking participants to speak about personal experience and emotion. This project is drawing upon emotional attachment

within a close-knit community, and therefore, anonymity of participants must be respected. The identification of sacred place will simply be mapped with plots and share no identifiable link with the participant. Furthermore, this participatory form of research requires the researcher to be physically present in the community, which shares best practice from similar participatory models. Coercion of participants will be avoided at all times using appropriate measures such as consent forms and the use of social media to promote the research in public forums whereby participants can take part freely.

The practices outlined in this methodology have sought to emulate those of Hester's (1985) of the less transferable approaches the model used. The mapping of sites of attachment in Darran Park is fundamental to this research project, by way of a visual representation of Ferndale's attachment to the space. This data will be supported by more traditional research approaches such as questionnaires and interviews. The research is firmly embedded within the ideas associated with sacred place, and yet, moves away from such language. Instead, the project is concentrating upon community engagement and wellbeing, which share resonance with current geographical thinking. This methodology firmly underpins the preconditions to development outlined in a scoping study, to assess the community assets, practices and interactions (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The data will provide a clear indication whether the local community are engaging in Darran Park as a whole, the level and degree of community engagement and what sites in the park the community engage with.

5. Discussion

Fotheringham, et al.'s (2000) understanding of spatial data analysis demonstrates that a number of distinctive clusteres are evident from the initial mapping exercise (Figure 3). These clusters of sacred sites are identified as being the site of the bandstand and terraces; a number of picnic and seating areas surrounding the park's central lake; the sports pitches and the war memorial. Hester (1985) identifies that these locations or clusters of place attachments are significant indicators that these sites are in fact sacred and provide significant everyday functions to the community. Figure 3 supports Hester's ideas, showing Ferndale's community share similar ideas of where the sacred sites lie, with few locations falling outside of these clusters. Hester (1993) suggests that the community may identify some sites as sacred, without necessarily realising them to be so, and that certain sites will be sacred due to their functions, meaning and significance to individuals.

A number of the clusters are evident surrounding the park's central lake, the Llyn y Forwyn. Sakici (2015) notes there are links between human beings and waterscapes, and that water can provide a number of wellbeing functions to individuals and communities. Yet it is not the lake itself that has been identified as sacred, but the surrounding areas. These are generally seating or picnic areas, as well as an elevated point to the north of the lake which provides a panoramic view of the park itself. A further site which has been identified as sacred is the terrace and bandstand. The terraces overlook the sports pitches, and are simply a basic concrete structure with seats and a tin roof. Again, the picnic areas, sports pitches and terraces all provide arenas for community engagement and interaction, proposing that the idea of a social space can be associated with the park. The final significant site identified in Figure 3 as sacred is the park's war memorial, which (Osborne, 2001) would argue is a site of memory and commemoration.
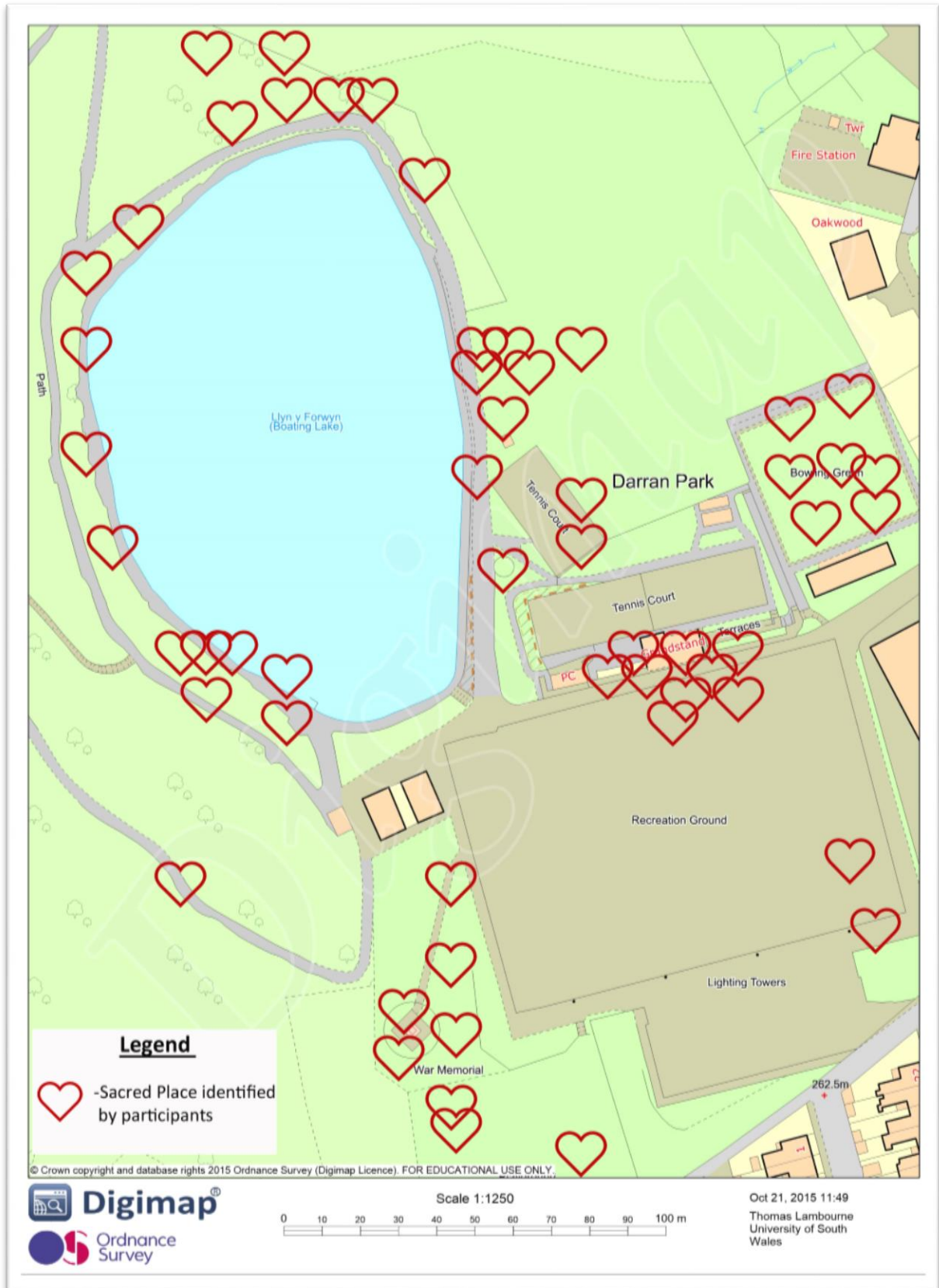
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Figure 3 - Mapping sacred sites in Darran Park (Lambourne, 2016); (Edina Digimap, 2016).

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5.1 Sacred Memories of the Park: The Pitches, Bandstand and Terraces

"Exploring the meanings of mundane rural spaces can deepen our understanding of the role

that the past plays in shaping places and identities and open up a multiplicity of vernacular

memories and relationships with the past" (Wheeler, 2014:22).

Memories and geography intertwine as both entities involve examining the interaction of

people, place and environment. By utilising memories and reflections upon a space, a

depiction of the interaction of people and place can arise. The concept of memory is broad,

encompassing knowledge (White, 1987), story (Lane, 2002), and culture (Hoelscher &

Alderman, 2004). All of these concepts share a relation to the past and historic context to

sacred place. This understanding of the past enables a consideration into the present and

the future, to both inform and utilise community assets as well as understanding the local

vernacular. In Ferndale, these ideas share particular resonance with Darran Park, due to

both the strong local culture present and the close-knit nature of Ferndale's community.

Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) portray memory as power, something that when combined

with physical space produces what is understood as place. This powerful depiction of

memory ties in with previous discussion throughout the study. Hester (1985) argues that

"we smile knowingly at stories of tribes who proclaim their village square to be centre of the

universe" (Hester, 1985:14). This suggests that community spaces are sacred, and memories

can be used to understand the evolution of sacred sites over time and if these sacred sites

have remained a constant or have changed.

"Back when I was working down the pit, things were different then. For our age, we had it

hard compared to now, physically I mean. Down the pit for 8 hours odd would play havoc

with my chest. I would cough my guts up! You had the equipment, from NCB [National Coal

Board[6]] regs, but it was no good. The park [Darran Park], now that was nice, it still is nice –

don't go as much as I did mind. This was back in the early 50s, I was only in my early 20s still,

me and some of the other lads would go up the park for a quick game on a Friday quite

often. It was fun…yes, I think nice to just be out in the open with nature and have a bit of air

and quiet, for a lad in my 20s I hated how crap I felt running around! There would be a few

of us, go down the workmen's after, but nah we loved being out in that park. Fantastic

place. Some people say it's the jewel in Ferndale's crown. Me mam and dad would take the

dog up there too, every day, we only lived a street away too see. Me dad also worked down

the mine, he'd walk that poor dogs legs off, he loved being outside. He had a stroke not long

after the mine shut. He was down there a lot longer than I was mind. He didn't want me

down there, and I see why. The best thing I did was get out of that pit, not for my pocket

mind, but for me health. It closed anyway, 1959, it was."

(Participant A: Local miner, Blaenllechau Pit, Ferndale Colliery, aged 87. Interviewed during

March, 2015)

This account provides a positive view of the park's history as a space of wellbeing, and a

generally negative view of the coal mining industry. It identifies a number of key traits

associated with the South Wales' valleys during the twentieth century, including the

ascription of work and heavy industrial influence upon the landscape. This supports the

general idea of the valleys as a community strongly focused on its industrial heritage. It

presents a dark account of the impact of heavy industry on worker health. It demonstrates

that Darran Park has long played a function in sustaining a healthy local community,

whether that is physically or mentally. It is this health benefit that provides a socially

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[6] The National Coal Board (NCB) was established in 1946 and took over the sole management of all British collieries in 1947.

positive space whilst the industry provided the economic stability of the community. This supports more recent arguments that more greenspace provides less stress and improves the wellbeing of communities (Thompson, 2002). The account is reflective of hindsight, whereby the participant reflects on the space in a romanticised way, proposing that the functions that it used to provide were better than those of today. However, Selman (2012) argues that communities and individuals are reconnecting with greenspace as they still need and want these original functions that parks provide.

Participant A demonstrates that Darran Park has long been a space of escapism whereby community members have been able to remove themselves from everyday pressures (see chapter 5.2). However, Ferndale's post-industrial pressures appear to be viewed in a different way, with less emphasis on specific pressures such as the poor working conditions of mining and heavy industry, and instead, everyday societal pressures that individuals and the community face. There has been little physical change to the park from the 1950s until the present day, with the layout and structures of the park similar or the same. This shows Darran Park to be somewhat static in the functions it provides, and its original role remains sacred to the community. The Urban Task Force report (1999) suggests that as parks move into the twenty-first century, they must account for a reinvented society, which now requires new functions from outdoor and public open space. The report continues that a park should be in essence, a communal outdoor room, whereby the community can enjoy both the urban and rural nature of the space. However, Darran Park has always been a space for wellbeing and provided these functions. Essentially, the report just reinforces the park's traditional values rather than creating new functions for a supposed 'reinvented society'.

One particular area where the function of Darran Park has altered due to a changing community dynamic is the need for the feeling of 'openness'. Participant A reflects upon a space where the main component of escapism was the need for the feeling of openness. When comparing this notion to the space today, the need to escape the feeling of being enclosed has again altered, but still remains a dominant function for the park (Figure 5 (Chapter 5.2)). This is largely due to deindustrialisation, where miners would spend large periods of time in small, dark and enclosed space. Today, people are still enclosed, but again, in different ways. Ferndale is a compact and densely populated community, giving a sense of enclosure. Furthermore, modern day living has the potential for Ferndale's community to feel enclosed in other ways, for example due to the town's high level of unemployment and poor economic outlook. The park gives a sense of escapism from this, and Participant A confirms that this sacred attribute to Darran Park has remained a constant feature during the parks existence. The utilisation of the space for community interaction is a further sacred function of Darran Park (Figure 4). Figure 4 shows the bandstand and terraces, as well as the bowling green and tennis courts as sacred features to the park. These sites are generally spaces where individuals will have positive interactions with

Figure 4 – The identification of the bandstand and terraces as sacred.

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others. People with access to parks are more likely to identify social interaction as a health benefit than those that do not have access (Maas, et al., 2009). This demonstrates that social engagement is often not with neighbours or individuals that are known from other community efforts, but simply from the shared interest of engaging with an aspect or activity undertaken in a park. However, the facilities that Darran Park provides are limited in comparison with neighbouring parks within the borough such as Ynysangharad Park[7] in Pontypridd. Darran Park provides functions for a limited number of groups, for example the Angling or Bowls club. Although these groups have their own value, it suggests the park does not provide an outlet for wider groups (Chapter 5.4). This is detrimental to Ferndale's community health, wellbeing and general utilisation of the space. Darran park should play a role in facilitating extended social ties and networks (Maas, et al., 2009), which means that it should secure the same level of investment in its facilities as other neighbouring parks.

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[7] Ynysangharad Park is based in Pontypridd, one of RCTCBC's principle settlements. Recent investments have included the £6.3million development of a new outdoor swimming pool, gardens and play area facilities.

Image 4 - The bandstand and terraces in Darran Park (Lambourne, 2016)

One group that are using the park for a purely social and leisurely remit is Ferndale's youth.

Participant B observes that even before deindustrialisation, the space has provided a social

outlet for children and young people in Ferndale, which has remained a constant for the

past century. One particular sacred site is the park's terraces and bandstand, which serves

as a multifunctional social hub within the park. Image 4 demonstrates that the bandstand

has less of a traditional layout, and instead is a raised area with a multifunctional purpose.

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The terraces are an observatory of sports on the neighbouring pitches, however, it is also used as a place to socialise, as it provides seating and shelter. Participant B states that the bandstand is simply somewhere for young people to socialise away from the central town, and it is hidden away allowing users to indulge in activities that otherwise would not take place. Malone (2001) finds that the neighbourhood must provide sufficient space for the youth for safety reasons, to ensure that they do not seek alternative space which could have potential physical and legal repercussions. Darran Park supports this, by continuing to provide a safe and clear space for Ferndale's younger population.

"When I was a kid, we used to doss around on the sports pitches, and all sit under the bandstand having a smoke and a chat. We weren't hurting anyone, other than ourselves for smoking that is! But…it was just where you went. They still go there today, the kids. Most of the time they cause no problem, it's just somewhere for them to be, probably away from their mam of course! But seriously, that bandstand, those pitches, if they could tell a story…"

(Participant B, lived in Ferndale since childhood).

'Me and the lads only go up the park for a game, I used it a few years ago like it was fun, but yeah, sport mainly'.

(Participant C, college student and Ferndale resident since birth, aged 17)

Malone (2001) argues that children living in towns and cities are often disconnected from the environment and outdoors and instead retreat to home environments. This detracts from the view that spontaneous outdoor engagement is beneficial to wellbeing, to engage young people in the outdoors. This further correlates to the notion of Ferndale's economic development, which shows that the town lies within one of Wales most deprived regions

(Welsh Government, 2014). Children may not have access to wider environmental interactions, which means that Darran Park must play a dominant role in providing a space for this interaction. An interview with an RCTCBC and consultation with local residents has found that there is little funding for the bandstand's restoration, and the structure is becoming unstable and weak. This will potentially have a detrimental effect on a designated space for young people to socialise and engage in Darran Park's open space. Furthermore, it may displace Ferndale's youth from the park, which has the potential for wider social problems in the town.

This chapter sought to examine how sacred sites have evolved, changed and altered in Darran Park, through exploring memories of the space. The data demonstrates that there are some dominant trends that arise from the interaction of people and the park. Sacred sites have largely remained a constant entity, but how the community view these sites has at times, changed. The collection of sacred sites identified reflects the spaces position of away from 'the everyday' in Ferndale. It has been suggested that parks must evolve and be rethought. However, this chapter demonstrates that the way in which the community engage with the space has seen little change, and does not necessarily need to change. One notable event is the discussed closure of the coal mines, which has arguably altered the town's economic and social dynamic as it moves into the twenty-first century. However, the participants during this chapter identify historic principles of greenspace as strong and dominant facets of place attachment to Darran Park, particularly the idea of enjoyment and health. Overall, sacred sites are supported through memories as being constant and rooted, with little change in their physical presence, but some degree of change in how they are viewed by the community.

5.2 A Tranquil Space: Water, Openness and Sounds

Sacred place has been demonstrated as a landscape that provides unique and special functions for its users. Harvey (1990) notes that tranquility is simply a cognitive quiet, a place whereby everyday disturbances are minimal and humans can simply remove themselves from mundane processes. This argument proposes that tranquil space is special and unique, again, sharing similar characteristics with ideas of sacredness. Parks and greenspaces share many of the dominant ideas surrounding tranquil space, with particular reference to the "percentage of water, flora and geological features contained within the scene" (Pheasant, 2010:6). Furthermore, a park is considered a tranquil environment due to its restorative purpose, a space whereby fascination or attention is placed upon cognitive rest and there is a general improvement in individual's aesthetic surrounding (Herzog & Bosley, 1992). Ferndale's shift to a post-industrial landscape maintains the notion that mental wellbeing may override that of physical wellbeing, due to a changing societal dynamic and less emphasis upon more traditional associations of greenspace. These ideas correlate to the overall ethos of this research, to potentially engage individuals in greenspace, by understanding the sacred assets to the community. Figure 5 demonstrates that stereotypical representations of greenspace are still prevalent in Ferndale, with dominant ideas of tranquility overriding current academic language such as wellbeing and community.

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Figure 5 – Participant's understandings as to why Darran Park has sacred functions

"Ever since I was a kid, I have always gone up the park to chill; it's different now, less people

around than back then [1970s], but still nice to watch the wildlife by the lake and actually

have a bit of peace and quiet" (Participant D)

Tranquility and nature intertwine as the two processes are perceived to reinforce one

another. The research demonstrates that participants envisage Darran Park as a natural

space through the use of language such as 'green', 'peaceful' and 'picturesque' (Figure 5).

Earlier notions of tranquility are associated with the park due to its position as a space of

escapism to a perceived natural space, to counteract physical pressures associated with

South Wales' heavy industry. Hinchcliffe (2007) argues that people often view nature as

lying outside of the social world, as something that can be viewed, quantified and told.

Darran Park is a place that previously played a dominant role in industrial escapism, for its

natural assets, which suggests that tranquility has been a continuous asset for the park

which has been worth 'escaping' to. This is largely evident through the community's use of

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the park, (Participant D), which finds that many members of the local community utilise the park for its health and social benefits, to relax in its natural setting. Although Darran Park has certain facets of urban to rural hinterland, the general foundations of the park encompass stereotypical representations of rurality, from the generalisation of a green and natural idyllic façade.

Nature is a way of embedding ideas of wellbeing and sustainability in towns and cities, by delivering a health and enjoyment benefit to greenspace, as well as the restorative functions associated with tranquil space. There has been a continually decreasing level of greenspace in western urban environments, which has been particularly detrimental on the link between nature and enjoyment in urban space (Maas, et al., 2006). Although nature is not bound to greenspace, it is the symbolic ideal of Darran Park that users associate with nature itself and subsequently the enjoyment of a natur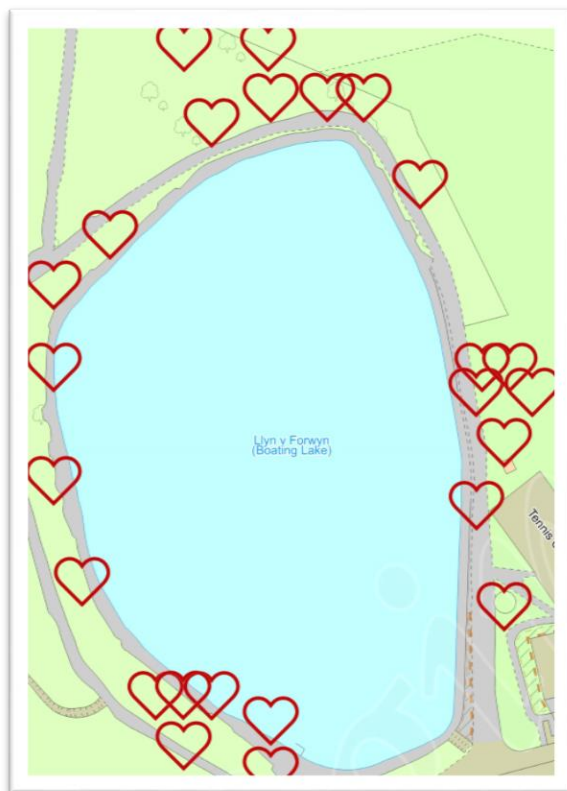al space. The community reinforce these ideas stating that "I think nice to just be out [in Darran Park] in the open with nature and have a bit of air" (Participant A). Darran Park emulates these traditional symbolic notions associated with natural landscapes, with greenery, woodland and waterscape. The mapping exercise (Figure 6) found the majority of users identified the perimeter of the lake as a sacred site to the park, the bandstand or the sports and play equipment in the park. Although not all of

Figure 6 – Sacred sites surrounding the Llyn y Forwyn.

these facets to Darran Park are definitively 'natural', they are positioned in the setting to reflect its natural character. This suggests that in Darran Park nature is an underlying principle to human enjoyment of the space, due to the associated opportunities that natural space can deliver. Furthermore, the users of the space reinforce the notion that Darran Park is a tranquil space, as a space whereby enjoyment can occur and everyday stress can be minimised.

Sakici (2015) identifies the general link between waterscapes and tranquility, finding that "natural and almost natural water compositions are preferred more and create a sense of tranquility on users" (Sakici, 2015:194). This identification is pertinent in Darran Park, with Figure 2 demonstrating that participants have identified the area surrounding the Llyn y Forwyn (Darran Park Lake) as a sacred site conveying a particular emotional engagement with participants. Furthermore, Figure 1 has reinforced that tranquility is one of the main features of Darran Park that the community positively identifies with. To echo previous ideas, the correlation of nature and water are both positive forces on the notion of a cognitive quiet. Darran Park lake provides a space whereby local residents can simply escape from Ferndale's dense built form and from perceived manufactured twenty-first century societal stress.

Image 5 - Benches placed on the northern edge of the lake (Lambourne, 2016).

Figure 6 demonstrates that the participants perceive the area surrounding the lake as sacred with a number of significant clusters on its perimeter. Many of the sites have been identified as sacred have a communal seating area or picnic benches (Image 5). This suggests that people identify these sites as sacred as they have the opportunity to stop, rest and socialise at these points. This shows the lake to be a space that makes users feel

tranquil, with community members suggesting that "we like to sit and chat on the benches by the lake, it's nice to watch the water, its calming" (Participant E). This indicates that people are in a state of tranquility when surrounded by natural features, water and other people. Therefore, residents of Ferndale are using this central space for community interaction, to engage with the park and its nature, and moreover, to engage with other individuals. Sociability in parks has been underwritten through the body of this research, as a way of supporting and enhancing wellbeing. Ideas of tranquility reinforce this argument, by providing designated social spaces whereby interactions can take place to be physically and mentally restorative and improve people's wellbeing.

The lake has demonstrated a positive force on human wellbeing in Darran Park, through the promotion of tranquility. The existence of tranquility surrounding the Llyn y Forwyn can be established as a subtle entity, where everyday users of the park explicitly identifying the lake as an asset to the park that adds tranquility. Figure 5 overtly mentions tranquility as a dominant force in the uniqueness of the park, however only a small percentage of respondents actually identified with the term 'lake' as something that makes Darran Park emotionally unique and attachable. When comparing this number with the sacred mapping in Figure 6, there is a clear identification with the surrounding area of the lake as being a sacred asset within Darran Park. This implies that the lake is overlooked as being a physical force in the promotion of wellbeing, and instead an unnoticed and simply aesthetic quality to the park.

The temporal change in the park and particularly surrounding the lake must be considered when examining Darran Park's levels of tranquility. The research has gathered perceptions with little stipulation of time, simply gathering participant's views of sacred places within

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the park. Herzog & Chernick (2000) argue that parks can be spaces of fear and danger, and there are numerous social and design factors that may influence this. The identification of the lake being a sacred asset to Darran Park can be suggested as being so only during day light hours and clear visibility. The research has already argued that tranquility is only present when individuals are generally surrounded by others and there is little chance of danger or harm for the individual. Darran Park lake during evening periods or poor weather is remote, with few overlooking windows from properties and many visual obstacles. This significantly increases the perceived risk of harm for park users from the lake itself as well as other users. The study has found that a Tuesday afternoon in February saw a decrease of 55% in the volume of footfall on the lake path compared to the same time during August. This demonstrates that seasonality can also have a detrimental effect on perceived levels of tranquility in Darran Park, due to the decreased footfall in the space during the winter months.

Nature manifests itself through Darran Park, and is identified as one of the reasons the site is ultimately sacred (Figure 5). This may be due to the visual and audible differences to that of the nearby streets of Ferndale, or simply the green aesthetic of the park. Ferndale is relatively enclosed, whether imagined or visible, the streets are dense and compact and the topography eclipses the town. Furthermore, Ferndale is enclosed due to poor infrastructure, transport and its resulting geographical isolation. Darran Park is more accessible than the neighbouring greenspace which consists of steep hillsides, due to its integration with the town's infrastructure and built form. However, parts of the park are cut off from the streets, with a steep incline and long pathway from its northern entrance. Participant E states that "I don't go up in the winter months; it's a bit out of the way" (Participant E). This suggests that there is a degree of fear in the park. Herzog & Chernick (2000) indentify that natural space

can worsen ideas of fear in greenspace, particularly if there are areas which are disused or not well maintained. Although Darran Park appears a well-kept and managed space currently, RCTCBC are making numerous cuts which have the potential to give the park less of a maintained feel, and increase fear within the space.

A soundscape can be identified as an influencing factor in the physical and emotional designation of tranquil space. Tranquility can be affected by both mechanical and biological sounds, which are both applicable in greenspace (Pheasant, 2010). Soundscapes and tranquility are now embedded within Welsh policy as an essential component in sustaining wellbeing. It is also identified by residents in Ferndale as supporting the emotional uniqueness of Darran Park (Figure 5). The European Union recognise the importance of designated quiet areas under the 'Environmental Noise Directive', which requires the production of maps for major infrastructure and industry as noise generators across towns and cities. Wales has adopted these notions in relation to Cardiff, Newport and Swansea due to the directive's urban focus. Furthermore, Planning Policy Wales 'Development Plans and Noise and Lighting' adopts a strategy focused upon future developments and infrastructure, again with an urban focus (Welsh Government, 2016). As previously discussed, Ferndale and Darran Park are neither a considerable urban or rural community, and therefore the principles of designated quiet zones are not yet overtly mentioned in development policy. However, Participant A argues that "I think it's nice to just be out in the open with nature and have a bit of air and quiet [in Darran Park]" (Participant A). This suggests that even though parks like Darran Park are not always politically recognised for their tranquil wellbeing benefits, the tranquil sounds of the park can be associated with many of the identified sacred sites (Figure 3).

Parks have experienced numerous changes and challenges, and yet tranquility, one of the underlying principles of historic neighbourhood parks is still demonstrated as being prominent in Darran Park today. Sacred sites such as the lake, the surrounding picnic areas as well as the sounds, views and social aspects of Darran Park have all shaped the space as both sacred and tranquil for the community. There are certain physical and sensory sites which the community feel are not tranquil, particularly the sites which are hidden from general view on the park's western boundary, and these sites in particular have the potential to impact the site's sacredness. Herzog & Chernick (2000) argue that the most successful neighbourhood park in terms of providing a tranquility is "a relatively open area liberally endowed with well-tended natural elements that do not hinder visual access" (Herzog & Chernick, 2000:38). It is the idea that parks need to have an element of open space and nature, and yet these concepts need to be successfully maintained to fit the community need. At present the community agree the space is well tended and maintenance is sufficient, which promotes a safe and inviting environment. To understand the balance between the physical attributes to Darran Park enables the deeper understanding of what makes the space tranquil, and the wider implications this tranquility has on Ferndale's wellbeing.

5.3 The War Memorial and Commemoration

Traditionally, parks and greenspace in the UK are reflective of processes of commemoration and memorialisation. Commemoration is understood as a process of memory, grieving and reflection upon deceased friends or relatives. The process of commemoration is personal, and will differ between individuals. Geographers are concerned with the associated meanings that derive from place, and study commemoration from a locational and spatial perspective (Foote, 2007). Commemoration implies the idea of something special, and unique to individuals. This supports this geographical understanding of sacred place, as a unique connection with special landscapes (See Chapter 2.1). Due to the sacred and highly personal nature of commemorative sites, people may interact with spaces differently when engaging in commemoration. Individuals may utilise different spaces for physical and personal associations with a lost friend or relative. Darran Park may be perceived as a space of commemoration due to its spatial and social characteristics (Figure 7; Participants D & E). Physically, the process of memorialisation embeds structures and symbols within Darran Park, as a site to reflect upon certain events or individuals. Generally, these structures may be a memorial wall, garden or simply a plaque. Socially, Darran Park has been identified as a space of reflection, with participants sharing stories of past memories and experience in the space with individuals and family. This chapter seeks to explore whether Darran Park's traditional commemorative sites such as the war memorial as well as its emotional and intangible features are an outlet to encourage an alternative form of community engagement.

"I go up the park with my husband when he's back [from working in overseas in the British Army]. We go over the park for the quiet, to be outside. I think he likes to just think about

things and unwind. I know it's not the same, but it just helps him I think. He's seen some awful things away and lost some mates. To live near the park is nice, we overlook it actually from up the top, we can go out and just relax and spend time together and with the kids. I think spending time with the family is really what it's for."

(Participant D, local community member aged 42).

"I don't use the park as much anymore as I struggle with the hill...me and me husband would take our Border Collies round the lake on a summers evening. He passed away a few years ago, but it's a nice memory I have"

(Participant E, local community member and former teacher, aged 75).

Participant D suggests that the in terms of commemoration, a specific sacred site cannot always be identified in the park, instead a general place attachment to the space as a whole. This may be referred to as a 'peaceful landscape', and share similarities with previous understandings of sacred spaces, as space that allows users to think and reflect upon life experience (Gough, 2000). Participant D argues that it is the semiotics of Darran Park that enables this space to be seen as a space of commemoration. It has both audio and visual distinctiveness in Ferndale, with more open space and natural features. This generally emulates ideals of tranquility and openness. Furthermore, the park has been demonstrated as a reflective landscape bound to ideas of individual and collective memories. Participant D identifies Darran Park as a space of commemoration by reflecting on individuals that potentially have never even visited the park itself. Therefore, memories are evident in Darran Park to provide a space where commemoration can be through both memories of the park itself, but also reflections on wider experiences and relations outside of the park.
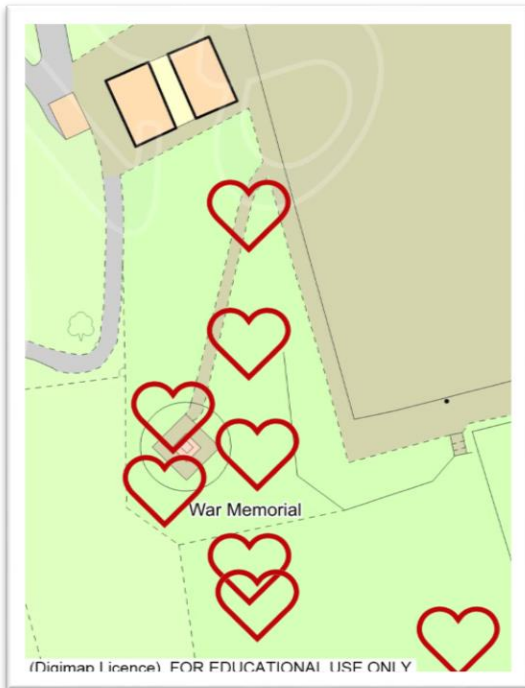
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Figure 7 - Identification of the war memorial as a sacred site

The use of physical structures in Darran Park indicates that the space is used as a site of commemoration. Traditionally, war memorials are reflective of soldiers from World War One, as a structure to engrave and remember the lives lost during that period. Inglis & Brazier (2005) suggest that there is a link between war memorials and ideas of sacred place, due to the highly intricate meanings and stories that are embedded within these traditional monuments. Although these sites are still used to reflect on historical conflicts, they serve as much greater beacons for wider commemoration for more recent combat. Monuments and the process of memorialisation are considered spatial and temporal objects laden with ideas of memory (Osborne, 2001). Memory has been identified as a factor in forming place attachments in the park and bonds with specific features or sites within the space. In terms of the war memorial's location within the park, it is set slightly back from the main thoroughfares of the park and yet is still a clear and visible feature in the landscape. It is surrounded with a small low lying wall and is elevated as a significant site within the landscape. This gives a sense of exclusivity and importance of the monument and the associated process of memorialisation in the park. It also is an iconographic representation of both memorialisation and a process of commemoration.

Figure 7 demonstrates that few members of the community identify the memorial as a sacred site, which gives commemoration a spatial awareness in the park. However, both

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'commemoration' and 'war memorial' were not identified as phrases associated with place attachment in Darran Park (Figure 5). Interview data (Participant D & Participant E) reveals that commemoration is can be a more personal and private process in the park, associated with people's feelings and emotions. This may indicate that the war memorial is viewed as a more traditional form of memorialisation, and societal change has enabled different emotional attachments with place to arise. Furthermore, there is now a greater academic recognition between place and the emotions, that succeeds previous dominant spatial characteristics and representations of place attachments (Davidson, et al., 2007). Therefore, the lack of attachment to the war memorial in comparison to other features in the park suggests social memory surrounding World War One has moved on, and is reflective of more recent societal conflicts. New conflicts that residents from Ferndale and the wider community have been involved with potentially have new outlets for recognition and these more traditional processes of memorialisation have changed.

Finally, war memorials are argued to be less about individual or even community commemoration and more a process of reflections of nationalism (Johnson, 1995). This is evident with Darran Park's memorial, with the inscription stating "Erected by the inhabitants of Ferndale in memory of men who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War". This recognition of nationalism and reflection of national identity once again reflects more traditional forms of commemoration and society. Communities are now less focused upon these traditional national ideals. This reflects societal change through the rise of social movements and less focus upon the monarchy and societal elites. Ferndale has a particularly strong social class, and the Rhondda Valley, like many post-industrial landscapes, is a Labour stronghold. This has the potential to forge a disconnection between Ferndale and more traditional and conservative ideologies that war memorials represent.

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Once again, this renders the memorial a more traditional site, with newer thinking surrounded by memorial gardens and natural features, reflecting more contemporary commemoration principles.

Commemoration is an undoubtable principle in every community. Parks are one of the spaces to facilitate commemoration due to the tranquil ideals that most parks represent. Commemoration in Ferndale is reflective of societal change, with less of an emphasis of commemoration through the park's war memorial, and more of an emotional and hidden or personal commemoration associated with the park. The process of grieving enables enhancements in wellbeing, and ultimately, parks are supporting and facilitating this process. Participants may not necessarily perceive using the park for commemorative purposes as a form of community engagement due to the highly emotional and personal nature of commemoration itself. There is an overall positive ideology behind engaging community in greenspace and enhancing wellbeing, and although community engagement in Darran Park may not necessarily have a positive undertone, it is has a beneficial impact in the promotion of wellbeing. Finally, the process of commemoration on the surface may appear a traditional and physical entity, through the dominance of the war memorial within the park's landscape. However, in Darran Park, commemoration is facilitated through societal changes and community and individual emotions.

5.4 An Inclusive Space: Accessibility, Groups and Time

The term 'community' has continually arisen during this research, from the origins of the research, to the primary and secondary data collection. Ferndale views Darran Park as a community space (Figure 8), with an overwhelming response indicating that the park is viewed as inclusive. Geographically, community is multifaceted and dynamic, changing with place, society and technology. Parks may facilitate a number of perceived factors associated with community, as a space of interaction and enhancement of wellbeing. Figure 5 (Chapter 5.2) finds the community view the space as communal, fun and inviting, all words that give a sense of inclusion and access. However geography demonstrates the intricate and complex nature of community itself, as an expression of hierarchy and exclusion (Sibley, 1995).
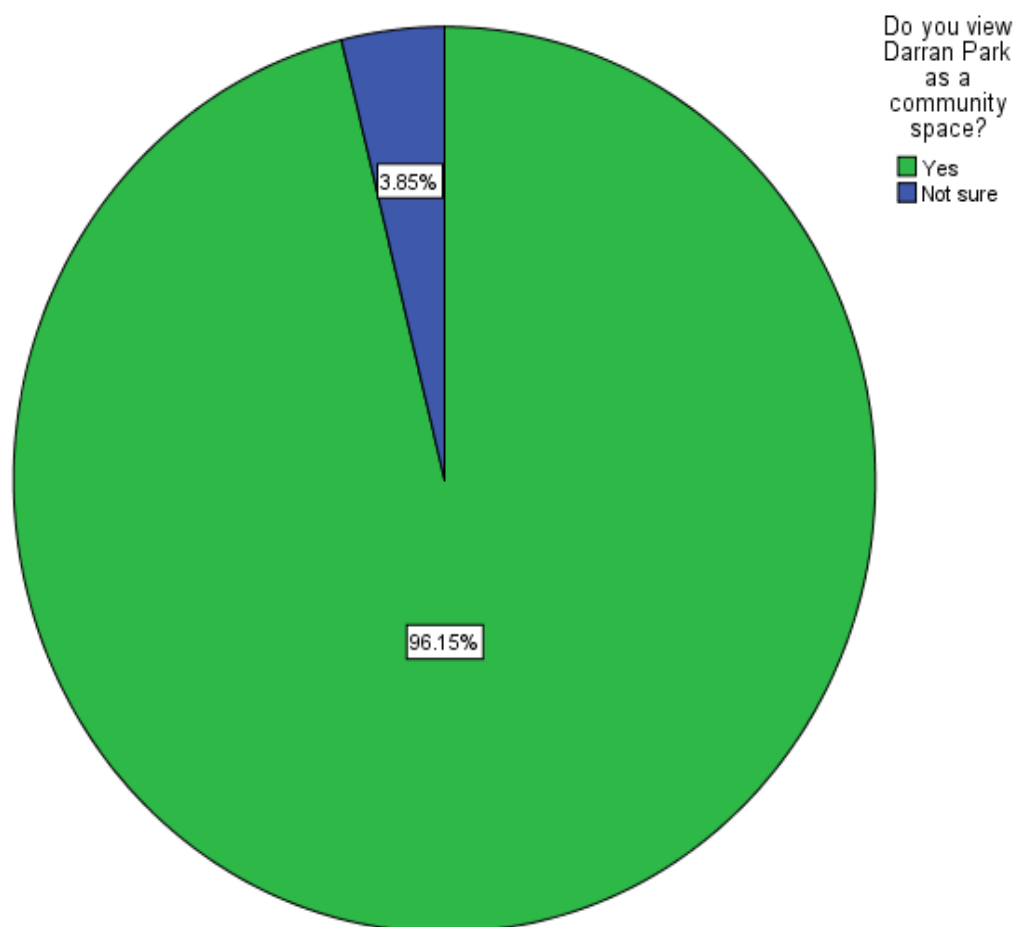

Figure 8 - Darran Park as a community space

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Ferndale and the wider Rhondda Valley are seen as a tight-knit insular community (See Chapter 4), yet ideas of inclusion and exclusion have arisen in Darran Park. Parks and services in the South Wales' valleys were thought to be community spaces. Like many other post-industrial regions, South Wales shared a philanthropic connection, as a way of encouraging mine owners to invest back into the community. This chapter seeks to explore how Darran Park has become a socially and physically exclusive space, questioning whether spaces of inclusion or exclusion can be termed 'community' spaces.

Exclusion can be considered socially through generations and age groups. Smith (2009) argues that neighbourhoods become exclusive in relation to elderly members of the community. The elderly become excluded through physical and psychological factors, such
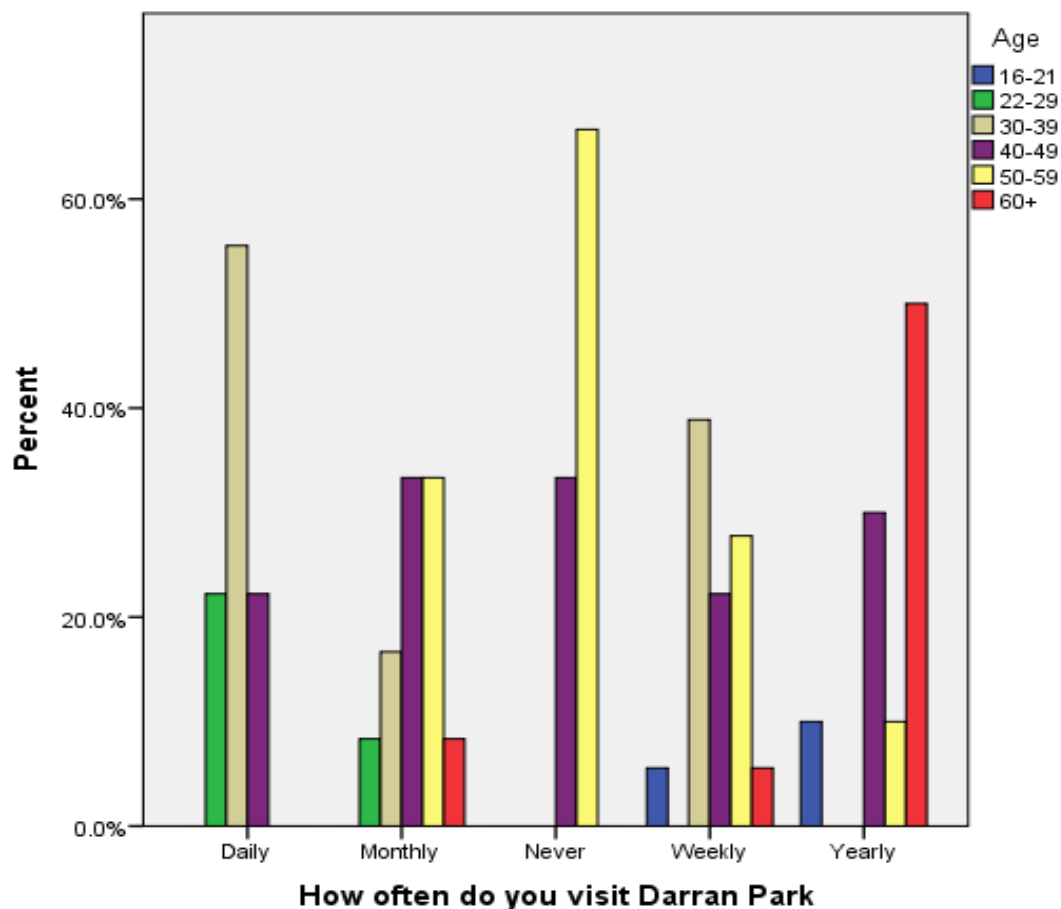

Figure 9 - How often communities visit the site

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as spatial factors to Ferndale, health reasons and identity and place. The primary data supports these ideas, with over 50s using the park extremely infrequently or not using it at all. The majority of respondents have been using the park since birth, with Participant E identifying that "there is a much greater usage of the space by young people than the elderly" (Participant E). This proposes that the use of the space declines with age, and finds the park a more appealing and accessible to Ferndale's youth. The community support these ideas, arguing *"when I was a kid, we used to doss around on the sports pitches"* (Participant B); *"Ever since I was a kid, I have always gone up the park to chill"* (Participant D). These findings are both detrimental to ideas of Ferndale's 'community', the sustainability of the park and of the wellbeing of elderly residents, participants are often speaking in a nostalgic way of their childhood and there is little mention of the usage of the park during their adulthood. Yet, the residents of Ferndale view the park as 'communal', 'inviting' and 'accessible' (Figure 5 (Chapter 5.2)), language reflective of cohesion and inclusivity. This perception of an inclusive space is not the case, suggesting that Ferndale view the community as something extremely idealistic and holistic, but the reality is that physical and social exclusions exist within the park.

In terms of wellbeing, this data shows wellbeing to be an exclusive social entity within Ferndale. Dinnie et al. (2013) suggests that wellbeing is an individual's need to feel well both socially and physically in society. This argument is a general academic and political consensus, and is reflective and encompassing of society as a whole. Furthermore, greenspace and access to greenspace shares a direct correlation to enhancement of wellbeing (Thompson, et al., 2012). These ideas are reflective of the previous memories gathered by elderly respondents, who continually refer to the space in a nostalgic manner, and speak of the 'best times' in Darran Park. This further supports the notion that the park is

not being utilised by elderly residents, as there are no recent accounts of experiences or stories from the park. Yet, to have a space that is used by younger groups, and not of people over 60 proposes that it is not simply the space that has become exclusive, but the associated wellbeing functions of the space have also become exclusive. The elderly residents may be referred to as armchair visitors, who may only visit the space in memory but not in person. The community therefore do not recognise the park as a socially exclusive space, and instead associate language such as 'communal' and 'accessible' (Figure 5) as to reasons why the park is sacred to the community.

Golden et al., (2009) suggest that loneliness and social support networks are most detrimental to the elderly population's wellbeing. Whilst this research has finds that the dynamics to place have changed, and that the street is now a satisfactory space to promote sociability (Chapter 5.1); parks may still be utilised as a space for community interaction, particularly among the elderly due to generally fewer time constraints placed upon this group. However, Darran Park is underutilised as a space of interaction for Ferndale's elderly residents, and therefore potentially detrimental to mental wellbeing and levels of loneliness. Nevertheless, this is not reflective of the community groups that utilise the park on a regular basis. Two groups were continually mentioned during the research process; the Angling Club and The Bowls Club. The Bowls Club in particular is utilised by elderly residents, and is seen as a way of encouraging elderly members of the community to utilise and engage with the park. However, this does not necessarily promote an inclusive park, as not every elderly resident of Ferndale may want to use the community groups, with the group themselves being seen as inclusive for certain residents with certain interests.

Image 6 - A large lockable gate preventing evening access (Lambourne, 2016)

In a physical sense, the park is exclusive through physical access restrictions, undertaken by the park wardens and authorised by local authority. The park is accessible during daylight hours and is closed and restricted in the evening, with large 'fortress' style gates (Image 6). Participant F identifies this to be a contentious issue in the local community, with only a small number of gatekeepers and a few neighbouring residents having keys for the park as well as the warden. This creates a physical barrier to entry has the potential to leave and

exclude members of Ferndale's community, and create moral and social issues, bringing to question whether the space is a truly public space or if the access control makes it exclusive and restrictive. Furthermore, parks have been demonstrated as spaces to improve individual's wellbeing and sites of place attachment. When considering the groups that are being excluded from the space, it is likely to be those groups of traditional working age and working patterns. Participant F is a teacher with a 1 hour commute, which would mean that access to Darran Park would be limited to the weekend and holiday periods only. Likewise, the space has been shown to be important for Ferndale's youth group, which use the space for socialising. This could be said to further exacerbate issues surrounding wellbeing, as the park potentially will have the biggest impact upon wellbeing as a way of alleviating pressures associated with work and the working day.

"Darran Park is not open all day and all night, it is locked at 5pm. This causes so much grief for us in terms of access for dog walking and using the park at night. Not everyone is around in the day to use it!...All it does is cause more problems, the kids want to get in, so they climb over the fence and the older people think they're acting up, when usually they are just hanging around under the bandstand like we did"

(Participant F, local community member aged 42).

Participant F has identified the issues that Darran Park suffers at the hands of access control, with an emphasis on perceived criminality in the space, with particular reference to young people's usage of the space. There is a strong link of place attachment, Darran Park, escapism and Ferndale's youth. This suggests that the management of physical and imagined access to Darran Park may play an integral role in the youth and other social group's wellbeing, with Blakely & Snyder (1997) arguing that "sealing off neighbourhoods

and creating walled enclaves further fragments our fragile social and economic fabric"
(Blakely & Snyder, 1997:7). This suggests that to close off or fortify spaces has detrimental
social effects. In this case, the park has been identified as a useful and resourceful
community asset, yet by closing the space social problems are exacerbated and perceived
levels of crime have increased within the park. The park itself is relatively overlooked by
homes, and therefore forms of natural surveillance are able to monitor the site on a daily
basis. In terms of the more natural obstacles that may designate certain parts of the site
unsafe during the evening, more preventative measures may be considered, in terms of
improvements to lighting, tree management to improve visibility and signage. Therefore,
these ensure more covert management measures, whilst enabling certain groups to use the
park, a community asset, without having to breach barriers and commit offenses.

The UK, and in particular the Welsh Government, are now increasingly focused upon
community engagement in greenspace (Neal, 2013). Childhood plays a strong role in the
identification of Darran Park as a sacred site, and the subsequent memories that have been
socially constructed from the space. Social exclusion can play a detrimental role in a holistic
community engagement in Darran Park, with some members of the community actively
engaged in different projects, functions and groups, whilst others are unable or unwilling to
engage with the space at all. Darran Park has been identified as a sacred site where
significant emotional and physical place attachments exist. To control access is ultimately
detrimental to this process, and has potential to make place attachment itself exclusive to
certain community members. Therefore, although Ferndale's residents fully support the
park to be a community asset, there is little evidence that the park is available and
accessible to everyone in the local community. Therefore, when terming Darran Park a

community asset, the participants are referring to the park's community rather than Ferndale's community, as a group facilitated and sustained through exclusion.

5.5 Sacred Policies for Darran Park?

"Affective bonds to places can help inspire action because people are motivated to seek, stay

in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them." (Selman, 2012:100)

Hester (1993) argues that during the Manteo study, one of the strongest successes of the project was due to the town council and community leaders sharing the same level of passion for the place and its future development. This ensured the project was sustainable, in a sense that the sacred sites identified during the study would be conserved and protected in a hope to move the community and place forward. Ferndale's community have identified numerous sacred sites in Darran Park. However, with local government throughout the UK suffering from cuts due to government austerity, the future sustainability of sacred sites in Darran Park is uncertain (Neal, 2013; Butler, 2015). Butler (2015) recognises that councils will receive cuts of up to 6.7% between April 2016 and 2020, which has required new thinking and lots of changes to how local authorities deliver service provision. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the problem is further worsened due to higher levels of social and economic deprivation (Welsh Government, 2014). Drawing upon data collected from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, this chapter seeks to examine community engagement from a different perspective, exploring whether the council and public share a similar stance on community engagement with the space.

Initially, the park was established by the community as a 'community' space (Figure 8). Therefore, as a community space, the park seeks to provide outlets for the community to engage with. One particular method that RCTCBC is rolling out across its parks and greenspaces is 'Friends of the Park' groups. These groups are now a dominant force across Britain, as a method to engage communities with parks, and support the process of

devolution of power to a more grassroots level. 'Friends of the Park' groups are supported by local community residents to protect, promote and harmonise parks in Britain (Keep Britain Tidy, 2016). This is delivered through a number of schemes held by local authorities and charities such as Keep Wales Tidy, to ensure that community engagement is fostered, but also to ensure that the economic, environmental and political sustainability of greenspace is ensured. Selman (2012) would argue that this is part of the 'Reconnection Agenda', to counteract a socio-ecological disconnection and focus on involving and devolving power to communities, whilst mitigating the disconnection of centralised power and top down park management.

"At this stage, [friends groups are] probably not [achievable], we need to do more to get the community to work with us in the future. Friends of the parks groups are a useful way to get the community in to the park, and then see where we go from there"

Participant G Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Parks Management in response to 'Is Darran Park socially sustainable in its current form?' November 2015.

Participant 6 identifies that a 'Friends of the Park' group would be a useful starting point in successful community engagement. Friends of the Park groups have emerged as a management technique to both involve and educate the community on the benefits and challenges of greenspace and enabling them to support the management of the park. However, Cornwall & Coelho (2007) recognise that the establishment of such community groups is a pressing academic and political challenge. It is recognised that policy makers share a general idealistic perception of community, in which all members of community are willing and able to participate. This is further exacerbated by the poor social and economic factors influencing Ferndale's community (WEFO, 2015), which potentially limits the

proportion of community members able to participate, as well as the willingness to do so. These new arenas for democracy may be viewed as 'yuppie' force where middle-class communities are given more power and more influence over their local community spaces, and do not resonate in Ferndale's post-industrial landscape.

Furthermore, by suggesting that a 'Friends of the Park' group will simply solve the problems
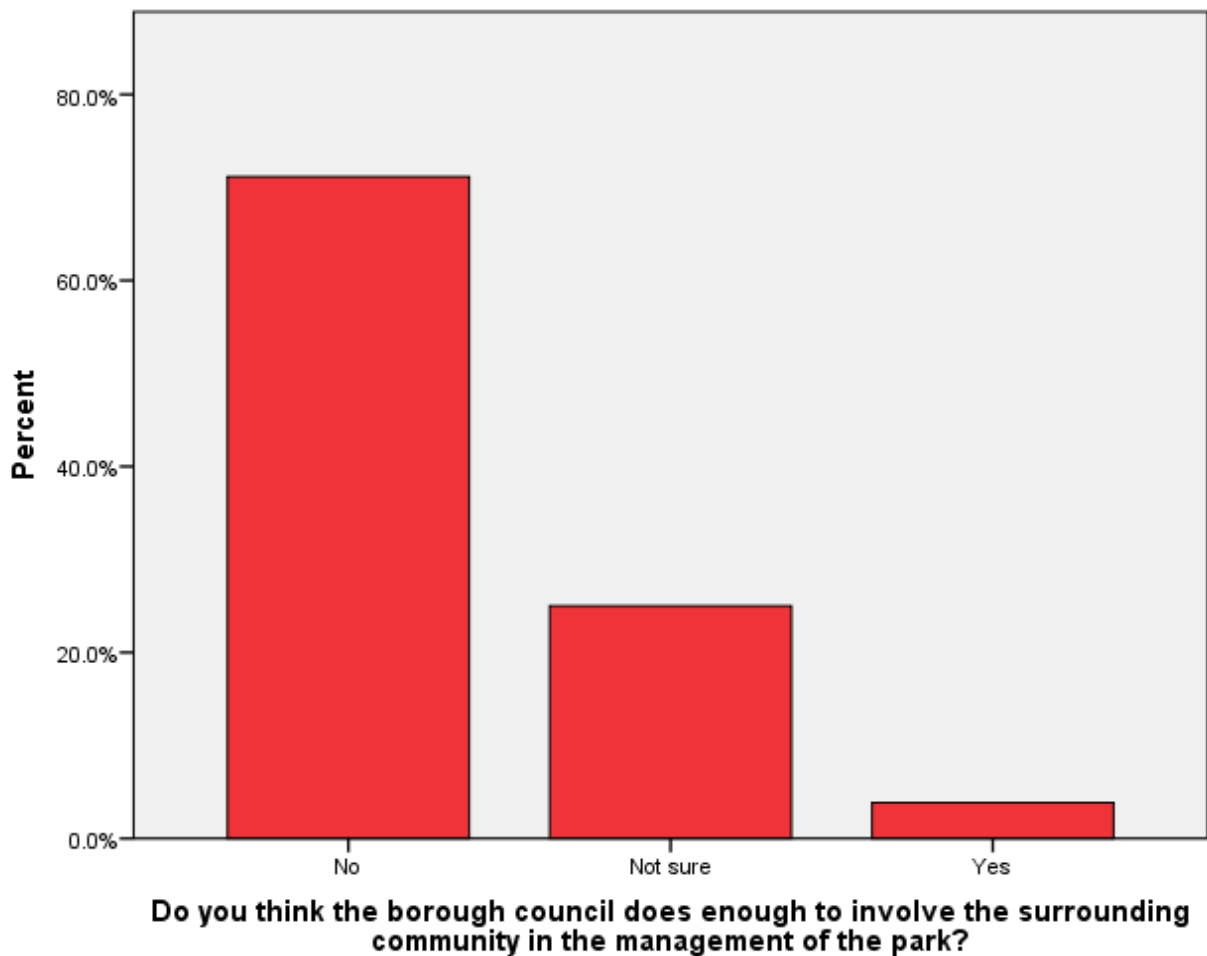
Figure 10 - Park Management in Darran Park, Ferndale

in Darran Park is a narrow approach to community participation. It suggests a lack of strategic planning and knowledge surrounding the participation process. Manzo & Perkins (2006) find that "neighbourhoods can either thrive or struggle. Residents' ability and willingness to address local problems are influenced by their emotional commitment to their community places" (Manzo & Perkins, 2006:348). This shows that a deeper

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understanding of community and the bond of community and place must be considered when attempting to foster community participation and management. Therefore, to encourage a successful 'Friends of the Park' group, RCTCBC must give the group some relevant issues they need to address in the park, with particular emphasis given to sites whereby the population has identified place attachment and emotional, for example, suggesting that a friends group focus on protecting and sustaining funding for the park's bandstand, which has been identified as a something that the community share a particularly strong place attachment with (see chapter 5.1). This then gives a friends group relevance and focus, as well as some direction and ownership over the park.

Figure 10 questions whether RCTCBC have been successful in encouraging community management strategies in Darran Park. The majority of participants have suggested that RCTCBC have made little effort to involve the community in the decision-making process and management of the space. It is identified that the council supports community management strategies, which suggests that it is a communication and education barrier to participation rather than a lack of opportunity for local people. Furthermore, Participant G supports this from a local authority perspective, arguing that the park is underutilized, and on a broad community engagement perspective, indicates that a great level of community engagement is first needed before any level of community management takes place. This demonstrates that the local authority shares a similar viewpoint on community engagement and community management strategy, and that a greater emphasis on communication may be necessary to ensure the two entities are able to move forward and support the underlying principles of Darran Park, to ensure sustainable wellbeing to Ferndale.

"By the community groups and sports groups, especially the anglers, but probably not by the cross-section of the community...the future of parks at the moment is very uncertain, without a shift in management and funding, they are not sustainable"

(Participant G Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Parks Management in response to 'In your view, is Darran Park utilised as a sustainable community asset?' November 2015.)

Participant G further recognises the previously discussed notions of exclusion present in the space, highlighting that community groups actively engage with the space, and there is knowledge of this. By identifying the lack of knowledge of other community groups, this suggests the idea that groups such as the Anglers Association play a dominant role in facilitating exclusion in the park, yet there is not a direct recognition of this from RCTCBC. Once again, this emphasises the importance of communication between local authority and the community, and particular members of the community that may be disengaged from community resources and groups.

Rhondda Cynon Taf as a region has experienced and will continue to experience economic change. Coinciding with economic and social deprivation, the local authority are reflecting this through new methods, with a particular emphasis on understanding how and what the community are using, as a way of concentrating economic provisions in the most effective manner. Parks have a continued support for the purpose of spaces of connection with nature and the subsequent wellbeing benefits (Selman, 2012; Thompson, et al., 2012), which has been subsequently identified by Ferndale's community. However, the lack of forward planning by the local authority indicates that this is less a process of utilising best practice in Darran Park, and more a practice of simply cutting services. RCTCBC has confirmed that budget reforms in the parks sector means that on site staff are to be phased

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out. This returns to previous decentralisation during the 1980s, which resulted in increasing neglect in British greenspace, with many parks becoming unattended with poor aesthetics. This is ultimately contradictory to Welsh Government Policy, which promotes the inclusion of spaces of wellbeing.

Sacred Greenspace in the South Wales' Valleys

6. Conclusion

Community engagement has been explored as a dynamic and changeable concept, linked with unique ideas of place attachment and sites of sacredness in Ferndale. Community engagement is contested and as this study shows, there is a tension between a general political understanding of enabling community management and influence and exploring a precursor or scope to the concept. Quite simply, the study has utilised community engagement to explore how, where and what the community engage with in the park. The research has largely recognised that the scale and parameters of place play a role in how a community will engage with certain sites within a space. In particular, the community has shared place attachment to collective sites surrounding social, cultural and natural features within Darran Park. Physically, there are a number of common sacred sites that have been identified in the park itself, from physical structures such as the bandstand, terraces and sports facilities, with a particularly strong functionality for youth groups and various community groups. The park's natural features, particularly the central lake, have further been found to be sacred to the space, representing strong ideas of attachment to tranquility, wildlife and exercise but moreover, a vision of perceived 'real' nature, embedding the reoccurring ideas of the need and want of a community to connect and reconnect with the natural environment (Selman, 2012). Finally, sites of reflection and engagement with the past have been identified by the community as sacred, which are more subtle and less identifiable due to the highly personal and subjective ideas behind such sites of attachment.

The initial research findings demonstrate that the community is attached with Meller's (2007) traditional philanthropic origins of greenspace, as a way of embedding social

functions in towns and cities and alleviating everyday pressures. This traditional method of community engagement correlates to modern ideas surrounding wellbeing, and in particular Welsh policies focused on wellbeing and tranquility. These philanthropic functions that the community utilises today may be recognised in a different way, yet, the function of the space remains the same. Some of the elderly participants identify a past link between ideas of escapism and the connection with nature as the main function of the space during the period of heavy industry in Ferndale. The recognition between people and nature appears to have been lost as industry in the region has declined. However, ideas of connection and escapism are still prevalent in the community today, and the community is still engaging with Darran Park in a similar manner, but without the industry, people perceive and view the space in a different way. This suggests that the level of understanding of the beneficial functions to greenspace is not necessarily recognised by the community today, largely due to poor communication between policy makers and Ferndale's community.

The strong philanthropic origins of parks in post-industrial South Wales has been demonstrated to imply the purpose of these spaces were inclusive, due to the strong rise in socialism movement associated with the area. Today this inclusion has shifted toward more of distrust between individuals, community groups, social and age groups and most strongly, distrust and disconnect between government, the local authority and Ferndale's community. On a social level, the park has a number of pre-existing and emerging barriers to engagement, both tangible and intangible, that make access and engagement problematic for a number of social groups. Furthermore, the park is found to be an essential part of Ferndale's wellbeing and ultimately a promotion of healthy lifestyles. This suggests that existing community exclusions has not only made the park exclusive, but the adoption of positive wellbeing also exclusive. The lack of investment and support for inclusive,

Sacred Greenspace in the South Wales' Valleys

contemporary and unique services such as Darran Park in Ferndale is highly visible to Ferndale's community.

Due to Ferndale's and the wider South Wales' valleys identification as an area of deprivation, the research has found economic, political and social marginalisation from nearby powerhouse Cardiff. However, the identification of community exclusion in such spaces for particular age groups and individuals proposes that the Welsh Government must focus more on individual communities rather that wider regions or boroughs. Coinciding with wider government cuts and the amalgamation of local authority boroughs, there is potential for access to services to become even more exclusive, particularly in areas with high economic and social deprivation.

The political disconnect and political distrust in Ferndale has influenced a number of factors surrounding community engagement in public space. In terms of a political disconnect from central policy, the language associated with greenspace is constantly evolving both in Wales but also the academic association with greenspace. Parks are now suggested as places of wellbeing, influencing people's everyday health and lifestyle. Yet the promotion of such language is rather contained to policies such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015). The devolution of such policies in Wales remains stagnant, particularly with reference to parks and greenspace. The language of wellbeing still remains an overly political objective, identified through RCTCBC and Welsh Government Policy, but not by everyday users of the space.

Ferndale has also provided a sense of distrust, a lack of faith and a lack of confidence with the community itself. The research has found the community to speak passionately about its past, its industrial heritage and its connection with Darran Park, yet more recent

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associations with levels of community engagement in the park are lacking. There is a strong reflection on the park's lost vibrancy and centrality to the community. The idea of political distrust is further worsened by notions of research fatigue, with the research finding poor respondents rates and a lack engagement with the research itself. The questionnaire response was sent out to a group of over 6000 people through social media, with a response rate of less than 200 people. Furthermore, a number of participants identified that Darran Park had been 'tried and tested' before, with no avail. This is reflective of wider research findings throughout the South Wales' valleys previously, particularly in post-industrial communities such as nearby Merthyr Tydfil, whereby there has been a significant number of projects aimed at exploring methods to improve the wellbeing of the area, whether that be through social, economic or other factors. This idea particularly resonates with Ferndale, whereby this identification of a 'tried-and-tested' approach by researchers and the local authority has meant that members of the community are no longer interested in engaging with research, as it appears to have had little inflection on Ferndale's levels of deprivation.

In Ferndale, research fatigue is demonstrated on an even deeper level, providing an understanding of fatigue and distrust at an even smaller spatial scale, Darran Park. The research demonstrates that it is not simply distrust in research in general for the town or region, but a sense that research has damaged the relationship between people and the park. This presented challenges in the data collection, with respondents suggesting that there was little interest in Darran Park as the space was hindered by previous projects and efforts. It has also resulted in disengagement in the community space, as participants of Darran Park see the space as an ongoing 'project'. This 'project' feeling present in Darran Park implies that it needs to be improved in its current state, and that research is constantly exploring ways in which the park should be changed or altered. Furthermore, the

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community is engaging with community spaces, as community in Ferndale is perceived as being marginalised and excluded by political and academic notions. However, the community has continually demonstrated strong trends in features and specific feelings that make the park attachable, particularly surrounding ideas of nature, tranquility and a space of escapism. Therefore, research should be aiming to utilise the park's current features and sell them or repackage them for the community, rather than simply changing them to fit with generic government policies for parks and greenspaces. Again, this supports the argument that Ferndale is indeed a unique post-industrial community, set in a geographically distinctive region.

Darran Park shares strong principles of a sacred place, a site of connection for local people with the natural landscape to provide contemporary and unique functions. The community has demonstrated a wealth of unique sacred sites within the park to which they have become 'attached', whether that's through the aesthetic, audible or emotional features that certain sites provide. However, many of these sites are not well maintained, particularly those which require heavy upkeep. Therefore, Darran Park must be dynamic in its approach to ensure its future economic, environmental and cultural sustainability, and will need to continue to engage the community in providing its essential everyday functions. However, the practice of sustainable greenspace in the UK is now evidently problematic and must be addressed. This requires a shift in attitudes for the community to what the space is actually there for, how it is represented and how it's perceived and sold by the local authority. Darran Park on the surface may be perceived traditional, and that to view the space as traditional should not be detrimental to community engagement.

The park's sacred nature has actually forged many personal and community based contestations. The space *is* intergenerational, multipurpose and distinctive in Ferndale's unique landscape setting. However, the site for some is too sacred, too reminiscent of the past and too narrow in its functionality. Certain groups and individuals feel the park is exclusive, or that its original functions have been lost or manipulated. This returns to the argument that sacred places themselves create internal and external conflicts. In a sense, certain members of the community feel the park should be preserved, kept in its original state and used in a definitive way. This research has found that the park does still use its origins, but politically and economically these origins cannot be sustained. Therefore, this is a method of conservation, to use Darran Park and Ferndale's unique features, but utilise them for their twenty-first century functions and the evolving community that has been shaped by industrial decline. What remains is the need for Ferndale to connect to the natural environment. General societal evolution has altered the community dynamic and the way in which the community connects with Darran Park, but the sites to which they are attached to, remain a constant and sacred.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - First example of sacred site mapping in Darran Park (Edina Digimap, 2016)

University of South Wales Geography Postgraduate Research Project

1. Please identify and plot three sites on the map below which you are personally attached to.

2. What features, sounds or sights make you feel attached to Darran Park, please provide three words below:

Tranquility, Peaceful, Community

University of South Wales

University of South Wales Geography Postgraduate Research Project

1. Please identify and plot three sites on the map below which you are personally attached to.

2. What features, sounds or sights make you feel attached to Darran Park, please provide three words below: NATURE, QUIET, PEACE

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Sacred Greenspace in the South Wales' Valleys

Darran Park Research Project

Welcome to the study.

This research is part of a Postgraduate Research Degree project in Geography. With recent cuts in government funding for parks and recreation, this project explores how parks can be run in alternative ways. It focuses, particularly, on how communities can become more involved in the running and management of their local parks and greenspaces.

Please take some time to read the information below, detailing why the research is being undertaken and what it may potentially entail for you.

Terms of Research

You have been randomly selected as a current or previous resident of Ferndale, Blaenllechau, Maerdy, Tylorstown or neighbouring areas of the Rhondda, and taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. You will need to be 16 or over to participate.

You agree to take part in the above University of South Wales (School of Applied Science) research project.

You understand that agreeing to take part means that you are willing to (but not obliged to):

- Complete this initial questionnaire
- Partake in interviews, focus groups and/or other research
- Provide data where possible

Data Protection
This information will be held and processed for the following purpose:
To explore how sacred greenspaces can kick-start community involvement in local parks.

Data Recording
You agree to the Univeristy of South Wales recording and processing this information about yourself. You understand that this information will be used only for the purpose set out in this statement and your consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Withdrawal from study
You understand that your participation is voluntary, that you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that you can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

☐ Agree to the terms and conditions of this study.

About you

Gender
[▾]

Forename
[_____]

Surname
[_____]

Email *
[_____]

Location *
[▾]

Age Category *
- ○ 16-21
- ○ 22-29
- ○ 30-39
- ○ 40-49
- ○ 50-59
- ○ 60+
- ○ Rather not say

Would you be willing to partake in further research on Darran Park? *
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

None of this information will be shared with any third parties.

[« Back]   [Continue »]

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Darran Park and You

What are your most common uses of Darran Park? *
Please select a maximum of 2.

- ☐ Running
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Cycling
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Bowls
- ☐ Other Sports
- ☐ Dog Walking
- ☐ Socialising
- ☐ Educational Purposes
- ☐ Other: [   ]

[« Back] [Continue »]

How often do you visit Darran Park *

- ○ Daily
- ○ Weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Yearly
- ○ Never

How long have you been using Darran Park? *

- ○ Since childhood
- ○ 1-9 years
- ○ Over 10 years
- ○ I do not use the park

[« Back] [Continue »]

Is there anything that would encourage you to visit Darran Park more?

[   ]

[« Back] [Continue »]

Managing Darran Park

Do you view Darran Park as a community space? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

Do you think the borough council does enough to involve the surrounding community in the management of the park? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

[« Back]   [Continue »]

Do you think Darran Park is well managed in comparison to other local parks within the borough? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

○ I have only visited Darran Park

[« Back]   [Continue »]

Where should future investment in the park be focused? *

Please select a maximum of 3.

☐ The lake

☐ The pavilion

☐ Bandstand

☐ Children's play area

☐ Sports facilities

☐ Bowling green

☐ Toilets

☐ Picnic facilities/benches

☐ Lighting

☐ Trees, flowers and other park greenery

☐ Signage

☐ Other: [   ]

[« Back]   [Continue »]

Further Comments

Please provide any further information on Darran Park that you feel is beneficial to this study.

[   ]

[« Back]   [Submit]

Appendix 4 - Twitter feed used to promote the mapping exercises, questionnaire and interviews during the project.

USWDarrenPark
@USWDarranPark

Follow

Questionnaire link goo.gl/forms/Fy2wRWFF…
#darranpark thank you!

Darran Park Research Project

Welcome to the study.

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Darran Park Research Project

Welcome to the study. This research is part of a Postgraduate Research Degree project in Geography. With recent cuts in government funding for parks and recreat...

docs.google.com

6:37 a.m. - 12 May 2015

Appendix 5 - Twitter feed used to promote the mapping exercises, questionnaire and interviews during the project.

Share your experiences of Darran Park!

Come and meet us for our first research event on the 17th or 18th April at 10am, Darran Park Lake.

Twitter.com/USWDarranPark | 01443 654289 | thomas.lambourne@southwales.ac.uk

All participants welcome.
This project is part of a postgraduate research project.
To contact the University of South Wales directly, visit www.southwales.ac.uk.

University of South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru

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