

**Access to sustainable lifestyles: disability and
environmental citizenship**

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

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Abstract

Reducing environmental impacts at the level of the individual or household is a key feature of sustainability debates, and there is interest in transitions toward more sustainable lifestyles. The implications of this for disability equality, however, have not yet been fully explored. This thesis examines disabled people's experiences regarding sustainable lifestyles and uses these to bring a disability studies perspective to various sustainability literatures, such as environmental citizenship, which have so far neglected disability issues. Policy discourses around sustainability and disability equality are also explored and their implications examined. Methods included qualitative interviews and focus groups with disabled participants living in one local authority area, enabling participants' experiences to be situated in the context of local sustainability- and disability-focused strategies.

The findings indicate significantly more complex and diverse engagements with sustainable lifestyles than has been shown in previous research. Although many participants' experiences could be conceptualised as issues of environmental (in)justice, they tended to favour perspectives based on responsibility rather than rights. Many participants could be identified as environmental citizens, demonstrating that disabled people can play an active role in environmental protection. Taking a social practice approach to the data also indicates a potentially valuable way to more fully conceptualise accessibility in relation to sustainable lifestyles.

This research has important implications for transitions towards sustainable lifestyles. Current policy contexts are significantly constrained by the wider neoliberal economic context, so change may need to begin outside the policy arena – such as the environmental movement. The movement itself, however, also needs to incorporate disability equality as a concern. Disability equality can be conceptualised as a feature of sustainability, meaning sustainability will not be achieved without the inclusion of disabled people. Considering environmentalism as facilitated by external factors rather than internal values may be a potential way forward.

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List of Acronyms

COM	European Commission Document
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
CoR	Committee of the Regions
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DECC	Department for Energy and Climate Change
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfT	Department for Transport
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ECO	Energy Companies Obligation
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
LA21	Local Agenda 21
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ODI	Office for Disability Issues
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Introduction

This research investigates disabled people's access to sustainable lifestyles, synergies between aims of disability equality and sustainability, and the relevance of current sustainability-focused policy and theory, such as environmental citizenship, for accommodating disabled people's experiences.

Reducing environmental impacts at the individual or household level has been a key feature of sustainability debates in recent years (Shove, 2010; Barr and Gilg, 2006). In the UK, this has led to strategies concerned with, for example, increasing domestic recycling and energy efficiency or public transport take-up (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), 2008a). 'Sustainable lifestyles' is a widely-used concept in this area, although there is little consensus as to what, exactly, a sustainable lifestyle entails (Shirani et al., 2014). The attention to individual responsibility in the context of environmental impact, however, has been considerable. It also links to a wider trend in the relationship between individuals and the state, with responsibility transferring to the former from the latter (Barr et al., 2011a; Smith, 2010; Halpern et al., 2004).

Much academic work also concentrates on individual-focused approaches to sustainability. Examples include focusing on pro-environmental behaviours. This approach considers how to explain and reduce the gap between attitudes and action (for example Lorenzoni et al., 2007; Stern, 2000). Encouraging and facilitating pro-environmental behaviours as part of sustainable lifestyles is also considered (for example Barr and Gilg, 2006; Barr, 2003; Hobson, 2003). Additionally, the concept of environmental citizenship has emerged from wider political citizenship literature. This approach explores how wider ideas about citizenship (such as responsibilities and rights; or the relationship between individuals and the state or the wider global polity) might be extended or re-imagined to include environmental concerns (for example Bell, 2005; Dobson, 2003; Van Steenbergen, 1994). Values as constitutive of environmental citizenship

have been a particular focus. Research has explored how and where environmental citizens might be identified in real world contexts (see Bell (2013) or Dobson (2010) for a review).

Individual-focused approaches have, however, been subject to contestation and critique. For example, an emphasis on individual responsibility has been critiqued for oversimplifying responsibility and depoliticising environmental concerns (Middlemiss, 2010; Maniates, 2001). Similarly, academic literature and policy focusing on behaviour change may lead to a lack of attention to more structural issues relevant to addressing climate change (Shove, 2010). This kind of critique has led to another strand of sustainability work – exploring environmental sustainability from a social practice approach. These theorists look to describe and explain how particular practices have evolved – such as travel, water use, or energy use (e.g. Pullinger et al., 2013; Shove and Walker, 2010; Shove 2003), and how they might continue to be transformed in more sustainable directions (e.g. Spurling et al., 2013; Shove, 2003).

Environmental citizenship theories have also been critiqued from feminist and Black and minority ethnic (BME) perspectives. Mainstream theories often fail to take account of the experiences of women and BME groups (for example Clarke and Agyeman, 2011; MacGregor, 2006), or non-Western perspectives (Gabrielson and Parady, 2010). Arguments that these environmental citizenship theories replicate many contested features of classic citizenship literatures or highlighting a lack of consideration of embodiment have also been made (Gabrielson and Parady, 2010; Latta, 2007; Lister, 2003).

Notable by its absence, however, has been any significant attention to disability issues – either in the approaches just mentioned or their critiques. Disability is nevertheless relevant to each of the topics mentioned above. For example, pro-environmental behaviours may entail access issues, or social practices such as travel or energy use may be impacted by considerations of accessibility. As the population ages and the number of people facing disability increases, this has implications for the success of initiatives to promote pro-environmental behaviours or to influence social

practices toward sustainability. Similarly, there are many potential access implications of transitions towards sustainability which could either perpetuate disability or, more positively, provide a new route towards inclusion. There are also questions about how much responsibility is afforded to disabled people regarding contribution as citizens (for example Morris, 2005). These have relevance for how disabled people are situated in relation to environmental citizenship.

In the UK context, most people – both disabled and non-disabled – are likely to be affected by the need to reduce domestic environmental impacts and the move toward sustainability. This is due to the emissions reduction targets legislated in the Climate Change Act (2008). In the absence of significant technological breakthroughs, these challenging targets will require considerable changes across all areas of British society, including business, government, and private households (DECC, 2010). Disability issues therefore need to be made explicit. This limits the risk of adding to disabled people's exclusion from societal participation through inaccessible solutions to environmental problems, as well as contributing toward the success of these solutions. Disability equality in this regard would mean including considerations of accessibility in relation to transitions toward sustainability by fully including disabled people in designing and deciding on initiatives that affect the general public.

Work in other academic areas of sustainability, for example environmental justice, has already begun to include consideration of disability.

Environmental justice emerged as a concern of those examining unequal access to environmental 'goods' and 'bads', and participation in environmental decision-making (Walker and Day, 2012; Agyeman, 2005; Bulkeley and Walker, 2005). For example, disabled people are one of the groups at risk of experiencing environmental injustice in regard to fuel poverty (Walker and Day, 2012). Relatedly, although not explicitly situated within environmental justice literature, Wolbring (2009) and Hemingway and Priestley (2006) have highlighted the additional disadvantage disabled people face during and after climate-related disasters.

More isolated examples of consideration of disability issues in relation to sustainability are also scattered across various fields, for example transport (Aldred and Woodcock, 2008) or ethics (Reed, 1997). A handful of research projects have also investigated disabled people's environmental concerns and experiences (Abbott and Porter, 2013; Adebowale et al., 2009; Charles and Thomas, 2007; Burningham and Thrush, 2001; Beazley et al., 1997). With the exception of Abbott and Porter, none of these investigations found particularly high levels of knowledge or concern about the environment among disabled participants; concern was predominantly limited to local environmental issues. Abbott and Porter's research (2013) did highlight issues such as inaccessible meeting spaces and recycling facilities, although as a short scoping study its level of detail was limited.

With the exception of some of these pieces of work, the field of disability studies has not yet had much direct engagement with the sustainability issues outlined here. There are, however parallel concerns and related areas of work. For example, equal access to nature and green spaces is being explored in disability studies (for example Mather, 2008), as is the more abstract relationship between human and non-human nature (Kafer, 2013; Alaimo, 2010). This latter work has developed in the United States disability studies community. Similarly, parallels have been identified between disability and environmental movement concerns (Imrie and Thomas, 2008). Where disabled people's organisations and environmental groups combine their efforts towards shared goals, there is potential for a much greater impact than when working alone (Adebowale et al., 2009). Disabled people also have specific expert knowledge that could be a valuable contribution to sustainability debates (Leipoldt, 2006).

This thesis attempts to weave a disability studies perspective through the various strands of the sustainability literatures and debates mentioned here, building upon and extending the scope of the work that has already been undertaken. It critiques the lack of consideration of disability equality but also proposes ways to develop more inclusive theory and policy. The concepts of sustainability and disability equality have been chosen as parallel aims of sustainability and disability studies literatures with accessibility as a key element of disability equality. Synergies between these two will be explored.

The meaning of disability, and what disability equality might entail, however, is contested – as is the meaning and aims of sustainability. Therefore it is necessary to set out the meanings adopted in this thesis, but also understand those used in other contexts and their differing implications. While synergies between aims of disability equality and sustainability are highlighted, it is also possible to identify tensions that are constructed by the partial ways that both are considered in current policy and academic discourses.

This thesis also contributes a detailed exploration of disabled people's experiences regarding access to sustainable lifestyles, which are constituted of various pro-environmental behaviours (Barr and Gilg, 2006). This in turn will highlight various complexities around accessibility that indicate gaps in many current ideas and initiatives to improve access. Both this and the work around the (lack of) understandings of disability equality in these areas will also problematise the assumptions that underlie many current ideas and initiatives to transition toward sustainability. Additionally, this thesis contributes empirically and theoretically to the environmental citizenship literature. It demonstrates the relevance of disabled people's perspectives and experiences for environmental citizenship theorising. These can challenge assumptions in existing theories that have so far not considered disability issues.

This research builds on a pilot study that was conducted for the dissertation requirement of a previous Master's degree. The pilot explored experiences of pro-environmental behaviour with disabled key informants (i.e. those with self-identified environmental interests and concerns). The pilot study also considered research methods. It examined the utility of visual methods as well as voice-only interviews, and also revealed relevant topical issues meriting further investigation. A key finding from the pilot study was that participants' understandings of environmental responsibility appeared quite individualised. This indicated that exploring the relevance of sustainability approaches emphasising individual responsibility would be useful to consider, alongside approaches emphasising social or structural explanations (which had initially been supposed to have more relevance).

Aims, objectives and research questions

This thesis aims primarily to contribute towards disabled people's equal access to, and full inclusion in, transitions toward sustainability, as one aspect of full participation in all areas of life.

There are four key objectives:

- To highlight the relative invisibility of disability in mainstream sustainability discourses, as well as the implied assumptions contained within them about who is, or is not, included in transitions toward sustainability
- To explore the lived experiences of disabled people in relation to sustainable lifestyles, highlighting;
 - barriers to inclusion
 - the expert knowledge disabled people contribute
 - the understandings disabled people have of environmental concerns, such as allocation of responsibility and the construction of identities in relation to environmental issues
 - the diversity of experiences among different disabled people
- To relate these findings to the policy context of the area in which participants live and examine the potential for policy developments
- To develop an understanding of the usefulness and limitations of current theories of environmental justice and citizenship in accommodating disabled people's experiences

In the light of these aims and objectives, the following four research questions have been established (including one with a number of sub-questions):

1. How have concepts of disability equality and sustainability been constructed in different discourses and at different levels of policy?

2. How do disabled people experience environmental issues in everyday life?
 - What, if any, barriers are faced in relation to sustainable lifestyles and which of these are related to disability?
 - What ideas do disabled people have about how to contribute to a more sustainable way of life?
 - What understandings do disabled people have of environmental concerns?
 - How diverse are disabled people's experiences and understandings with regard to environmental concerns/activities?
 - What ideas do disabled people construct about allocation of responsibility for the environment and how diverse are these?
 - What tensions, if any, are identified between the aims of sustainability and accessibility?
3. What contribution does current policy make to either addressing or compounding the issues faced by disabled people when seeking to engage with sustainable lifestyles? What policy developments at local, UK and EU levels might be needed to address these issues?
4. To what extent do theories of environmental justice and citizenship accommodate disabled people's experiences regarding sustainable lifestyles? Where and what are the gaps in knowledge/explanation?

Structure of the thesis

This thesis first outlines debates around the concepts of disability and sustainability. In this thesis both disability equality and sustainability are understood to have significant social elements, and the potential for synergy between them will be drawn out. In mainstream sustainability debates, however, this social understanding is often lacking. This leads to tensions between balancing priorities of disabled people and the natural environment. Similarly, the potential implications of environmental sustainability are often

missed in disability studies. Some research and theorising, however, has begun to address issues of disability equality and sustainability, and this existing work will be outlined to more fully situate the contribution of the current project.

Chapter Two then considers how the synergies and tensions identified in Chapter One play out in the context of policy. UN, EU and UK sustainability- and disability-focused agreements, policies and strategies will be examined and contrasted. Their approaches to disability equality and sustainability, and the implications these have for UK citizens, will be explored. This chapter demonstrates the synergy of approaches to these two issues in EU and UK policies, in a neoliberal context that prioritises economic sustainability.

Chapter Three examines how theoretical and empirical literatures have problematised and contested approaches to sustainability and the role of individuals. It begins to consider synergies and tensions that emerge when disability is introduced to these debates. It will be argued that disability studies can bring a unique critique to environmental citizenship theory, building upon its critique of broader citizenship theory. These latter two chapters will also develop the argument for the need to consider lived experiences of disabled people in relation to the potential issues that arise.

Chapter Four sets out the methodological considerations and describes how the empirical research for this thesis was carried out. This details the use of qualitative interviews and focus groups, and aims and results of sampling and access. It outlines how the various types of analysis were undertaken and also describes relevant demographic information about the participants who took part in this research and the local authority context.

Later chapters present findings from this empirical research and analysis, linking back to the literatures and debates discussed in the first half of this thesis. Chapter Five presents findings around the pro-environmental behaviours participants engaged with, demonstrating that disabled people can and do participate in sustainable lifestyles. The chapter then describes two 'types' of barriers encountered by participants in different areas – physical and organisational. The chapter also addresses impairment effects

and notes the experiences of key informants outside Leeds. Chapter Six explores two further types of issues which led to barriers. In the case of financial and social factors, however, it shows how these can act either as barriers or conversely can be facilitative of disabled people's environmental behaviours. Participants' experiences of different circumstances are discussed in-depth. Particular attention is also given to participants' experiences with the wider environmental movement.

Chapter Seven then takes a different perspective – adopting a social practice approach – to consider its potential to provide a systematic explanation of accessibility issues faced by disabled people in regard to pro-environmental practices. Focusing specifically on recycling and travel practices, these are deconstructed using a social practice-style analysis to demonstrate various different accessibility issues implicated in the practices. This chapter will demonstrate why a technical approach to creating access may not be successful. This analysis also notes where a current lack of consideration of issues such as disability has led to ableist suggestions for practice transitions toward sustainability which could create further exclusion for disabled people if taken up.

Chapter Eight, the final findings chapter, returns to participants' accounts to explore understandings of responsibility, rights and environmental concerns, and the versions of environmental citizenship these might imply. That many participants appear to meet literature-based criteria for environmental citizenship is important. It highlights the need to consider disability issues in future theorising rather than universalist disembodied ideas that implicitly exclude. This chapter also raises questions about how disabled people might contribute to society and to sustainability more broadly.

Chapter Nine, finally, returns to the research questions to summarise and, where necessary, develop considerations from the findings chapters. Recalling the idea of synergies and tensions between disability equality and sustainability, ideas from environmental justice and environmental citizenship literatures are developed to consider what conclusions might be drawn. In the light of this research it also considers how work going forward might address the issue of enabling access to more sustainable lifestyles.

1 Conceptual Definitions

This chapter defines key concepts for this thesis. Because of contested meanings of sustainability and disability (which can lead to different understandings of disability equality), clarity is essential to enable a critical examination of these issues in other contexts. This chapter discusses key debates about the meanings of both, as well as highlighting the synergies in the definitions adopted in this thesis. It also begins to explore potential tensions between other competing definitions existing in sustainability- and disability-focused literatures. Existing research that has begun to explore disability equality and sustainability will also be outlined. This chapter sets the scene for Chapters Two and Three by introducing key issues and starting to develop a provisional conceptual framework that can be used to evaluate both the policy context and the more theoretical literatures that inform and contest it.

1.1 Disability

1.1.1 Understandings of disability and vulnerability

This thesis seeks to understand the position of disabled people in relation to sustainability issues, particularly where action from – or impacts on – individuals and private households are discussed. This arose from a concern that in existing UK-focused policy and academic debates around sustainability, disability is often absent from consideration and disabled people seem invisible. Where references to disability *do* appear, however, they are often alongside uncritical portrayals of vulnerability or victimhood. For example, the only time disability is mentioned in the Department for Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) 220-page Carbon Plan is in a list ('households... housing someone who is older, disabled or a child') of those who will benefit from '...upfront support for basic heating and insulation measures for low-income and vulnerable households' (DECC, 2011, pp.37-38). Further examples of these portrayals will be explored in the following chapters. For now, however, it is important to highlight that vulnerability is a contested concept.

As Brown (2012) describes, in policy arenas in the New Labour era, 'vulnerability' became associated with a particular moral understanding of the 'deserving' welfare recipient. With regard to disabled people, this has often manifested in an idea of people with little individual agency or capacity who therefore need protection, e.g. from state professionals making decisions on their behalf. This idea of vulnerability therefore implies disabled people are passive or incapable. This implication is problematic (Beckett 2006b), but it is this understanding that can be identified in sustainability-focused policies, as will be discussed in Chapter Two. (Another, more empowering understanding of vulnerability will be discussed in Chapter Three).

The understanding of vulnerability presented above links to a 'personal tragedy' theory of disability (Brown, 2012; Beckett, 2006b; Oliver, 1990). Oliver argues that the personal tragedy concept underlies individual understandings of disability. It refers to the idea that disabled people are unfortunate victims of circumstance. Individual conceptions of disability understand the 'problem' to be a property of the person – what is wrong with them. Disability is therefore a 'natural' consequence of impairment. Potential solutions are similarly individually-focused, such as cure or rehabilitation (Oliver, 1990). Disability equality in this context may be seen as less of a priority because disabled people are seen as more in need of charity and protection. This is a brief description of a conceptualisation of disability that has been in existence for at least the last century, but began to be actively challenged from the 1960s onwards. Since a disabled people's campaigning organisation, the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), first distinguished 'disability' from physical impairment in 1975 (and later cognitive impairment), the issue of whether disability is a primarily a social or individual issue has been much debated.

A social interpretation shifts the 'problem' of disability to wider society. While an individual may have an impairment, such as hearing loss, paralysis, or a mental health diagnosis, disability occurs because society does not consider or value that person's needs (Oliver, 1990; UPIAS, 1975). This may be evidenced by the exclusion disabled people often face due to inappropriately-designed spaces or uninformed attitudes (see for example Scope, 2011; Barnes & Mercer, 2010) – including potential barriers to pro-environmental action. The social relationship

between people with and without impairments is therefore unequal (Thomas, 1999). Oliver (1981) named UPIAS' approach the 'social model of disability'. It is rooted in a historical materialist theory of disablement (Oliver, 1990) which highlights the connections between the development of industrial capitalism and the development of modern understandings of disability such as the 'personal tragedy' theory. A materialist understanding of disability views the current neoliberal capitalist economic system as playing a key role in producing and perpetuating the oppression disabled people face because of its emphases on paid work and individual or privatised responsibility (Wilton and Schuer, 2006; Barnes, 2005).

From a social model perspective, vulnerability is context-dependent rather than a property of the individual: while disabled people may experience vulnerability in certain situations, being disabled does not in itself mean an individual is 'vulnerable'. In terms of disability equality, achieving integration into employment is a central aim (supported by full accessibility in other areas such as education, transport and so on) (for example UPIAS, 1975). This analysis also encompasses the need to radically alter our understandings of work and how employment is organised (Barnes, 2000). Considering activities such as managing a team of personal assistants as legitimate work, or creating flexibility and questioning key organising principles like productivity and profit, are key aspects of this.

The social model has, however, been subject to wide-ranging critiques, for example regarding the semantic understandings of the terms 'disability' and 'impairment' (Thomas, 2004a). It has not been taken up widely among the general, non-political population. Although popular among disability activists, social model ideas are used by less than 10% of disabled people to describe their experiences (Williams et al., 2008). It has also faced criticism from those who suggest it ignores the realities of impairment and cannot effectively deal with issues such as pain or fatigue without acknowledging impairment also (e.g. Crow, 1996). As Finkelstein (2001) – a founding member of UPIAS – argued, however, the usefulness of the social model of disability was as a tool to enable a different perspective on disability, but explicitly *not* an attempt to generate explanations or theory.

Thomas (1999) suggests that many of these critiques stem from the conflation of two different social approaches to disability. She argues that UPIAS's original statement of disability contains a 'social relational' understanding of the unequal social relations between disabled and non-disabled people. This situates disability as 'a form of social oppression' (Thomas, 1999, p.40). The manifestations of this oppression can be termed 'disablism', in a similar way to how patriarchy is understood to manifest in sexism (Thomas, 1999). She describes the other, 'property', approach to disability as 'individuals' restrictions of activity' (Thomas, 1999, p.41) with the cause of these restrictions attributed to social factors. Thomas suggests that the uncritical conflation of these approaches has led to the misinterpretation of the social model as restricted 'social barriers' interpretation of disability and left it open to criticism (Thomas, 1999, 2004a).

Thomas, however, suggests that the social relational element offers significant freedom to consider both disability *and* impairment effects: the restrictions in activity 'directly associated with... impairment' (Thomas, 1999, p.42) that also have significant implications for disabled people's lives. Moreover, she highlights the potential to consider not just restrictions on activity but also dimensions of 'social barriers and limits to our psycho-emotional wellbeing' (Thomas, 1999, p.45) – i.e. internal as well as external impacts of disablism. A social relational approach to disability therefore offers the opportunity to incorporate both external and internal disabling elements of social relations. It recognises the embodied experiences of people with impairments (including impairment effects), while not diminishing the focus on those aspects that constitute social oppression.

This recognition of embodied experiences and internal dimensions of disablism also opens up the potential for a consideration of agency and complexity. This is useful because there is significant heterogeneity among those who might be considered disabled (Beckett, 2006a). Therefore different disabled people may well have differing experiences of environmental issues – such as not simply being 'vulnerable victims' in relation to environmental concerns. In contrast, it is important to highlight that, by virtue of living in the UK, disabled people may inadvertently be oppressors (in terms of having a higher than equitable environmental impact). This is likely to be concurrent with being oppressed by

experiencing disability, however. Similarly, a disabled individual might be well-off, or might also identify with another (dis)advantaged status related to gender, ethnicity or age, which may impact on their particular experiences in positive or negative ways. 'Invisibility' – or one-dimensional portrayals – of disabled people in sustainability debates, then, may be linked to overly simplistic understandings of disability.

1.1.2 Disability, justice and equality

Meanwhile, a social interpretation of disability makes it possible to conceptualise disability as an issue of social justice. For example, disability may be understood as a distributive injustice where disabled people are economically marginalised due to not being considered employable (DWP, 2013) or are paid less than non-disabled workers (Metcalf, 2009). Similarly disability may be an issue of procedural injustice where disabled people are excluded from decision-making processes due to physical or organisational/attitudinal barriers (for example a physically inaccessible meeting place, or a lack of accessible information). A third element of social justice is recognition (e.g. Fraser, 2000). Disabled people experience misrecognition where 'institutionalised patterns of cultural value' (Fraser, 2000, p.113) exclude or overlook disability, meaning that disabled people are denied the right to fully participate in society. Examples include welfare reforms (and media and government narratives) that position disabled people as scroungers (Briant et al., 2013), or ableist norms (of which more later) embedded in policy which cast disabled people as 'vulnerable others'. This is a slightly artificial separation of different aspects of justice which are in practice intertwined, but serves to highlight some of the irreducible aspects of social justice. Disability being a matter of social justice also has implications for the consideration of environmental justice, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Understanding disability as a matter of social justice fits well with the concept of disability equality used by this thesis. Fredman's (2011) idea of a multi-dimensional concept of equality combines dimensions of redistribution, recognition and participation as well as transformation. She argues that each dimension is necessary to form a truly substantive principle of equality. A partial concept may be in danger of increasing oppression, for example by erasing the importance of difference. It was noted earlier that a social approach to disability

considers the concept of work as central to achieving equality (e.g. Barnes, 2000, 2003). This can illustrate how Fredman's (2011) various dimensions of equality might apply in relation to disability.

Recognition highlights the need to value labour that is not traditionally seen as work – such as managing PAs. Valuing disabled people's dignity and worth, whether working or not, can be based on a shared humanity. Transformation links to the idea of questioning how current working practices are organised. 'Existing social structures must be changed to accommodate difference' (Fredman, 2011, p.30) rather than expecting conformity. Redistribution relates to disabled people not facing disadvantage whether working or not working (and also extends to other areas of life that might impact on this e.g. transport or access to education). Finally, participation highlights the overlaps between redistribution and recognition and is a necessary ingredient for solidarity and social inclusion which also promote equality. In this case, making the changes above would enable disabled people to be included as full members of society. Accessibility is important in this definition (to facilitate participation and redistribution), although by no means the only aspect.

Understandings of disability and disability equality adopted in this thesis have now been outlined. There is one further, related concept with explanatory potential for this thesis that should also be outlined in this section: ableism. It is to this concept that we now turn.

1.1.3 Ableism

As noted by Thomas (1999), the social relational understanding of disability highlights the 'unequal social relationship between those who are impaired and those who are non-impaired, or 'normal', in society' (Thomas, 1999, p.40). While considering disability place the focus on how this unequal relationship manifests as oppression in particular contexts, considering ableism puts the focus on problematising the category of 'normal'. Ableism is not a new idea but has received greater attention in recent years among disability studies scholars. Imrie, for example, described ableism as 'the assertion of the normality and naturalness of able-bodiedness, the notion that disability is abnormal... and the assumption that the goal of society is to return disabled people back to a normal

state' (Imrie, 1996, p.398). This highlights the concept of an able-bodied ideal which underlies the way society is structured.

Questioning normality has been a popular idea among disability studies scholars; normalcy has been critiqued as the antithesis of disability and an idea that perpetuates it. Shakespeare has argued that instead of 'interrogating the other, let us rather deconstruct the normality-which-is-to-be-assumed' (Shakespeare, 1996, no pagination). Davis (1997) demonstrated how the concept of 'normal' is historically situated and only became popular in the last century. Campbell (2008a), in a similar way to Imrie (1996), describes ableism as the assumption of non-disabled 'normality' (and desirability) which renders disability as other and less desirable: 'disability, then, is cast as a diminished state of being human' and 'impairment or disability (irrespective of type) is inherently negative' (Campbell, 2008a, no pagination).

The disabled body is a necessary feature of ableist discourses because it acts as the 'other' against which 'normal' can be established. This perpetuates the existence of ableism because the potential for examination of alternatives is shut down. An 'ontological foreclosure' occurs where it becomes difficult to think about disability in any way other than negative (Campbell, 2008a). These ideas potentially explain both the general invisibility of disabled people in environmental debates but also, where there is visibility, its limitation in terms of 'vulnerability' and victimhood. The concept of 'normal' also frequently appears in sustainability debates regarding reducing the environmental impact of individual and domestic consumption patterns, as will be explored in later chapters. Uncritical understandings of 'normal' in these contexts may therefore perpetuate ableism.

Campbell (2008b) also draws on Critical Race Theory and the concept of 'internalised racism' to construct the concept of 'internalised ableism'. She describes this as a common reaction to the experience of ableism whereby disabled people internalise 'ableist norms' (Campbell, 2008b, p.7). This can manifest in the avoidance of identification with other disabled people, in an attempt to distance oneself from the stigma of disability. Alternatively, it might entail minimising impairment and attempting to 'pass' as able-bodied, or a desire to perform in relation to these internalised ableist expectations.

Wolbring (2008) brings a different focus to the definition of ableism. He suggests that different abilities may be more or less valued in different contexts, and that ableism may refer to discrimination based on ability. This resonates with Finkelstein's (1975) work about an imagined village. Finkelstein described how 'able bodied' people could become disabled in a space designed for wheelchair users to highlight how current spaces privilege non-disabled people. He also later discussed the difficulties 'of living in a world designed for people with abilities' (Finkelstein, 1999, p.860). While Wolbring's definition of ableism is relevant for disabled people's experiences, he points out that it may also be experienced by other disadvantaged groups in particular contexts. For example, women may experience ableism where qualities associated with typical 'male' abilities are prized, or poorer individuals where consumption is highly valued. Wolbring therefore extends the concept to consider 'ability expectations' in different contexts (e.g. Wolbring, 2012). He also notes, however, that it is still relevant to consider specifically the ability expectations which cause discrimination against disabled people. He terms this 'disablism', one particular form of a more general 'ableism'.

Ableism is relevant for this thesis with regard to its associations with embodiment. Embodiment has often been a subject of debate within disability studies. Some have suggested that, with the separation of disability and impairment (and the ensuing focus on disability), the body was 'removed' from discourses of disability (Hughes, 2004). Whether or not this was the case, it has led to a new focus on bodies by some scholars, considering the relevance of embodiment to wider issues of disability: 'disability is experienced in, on and through the body...' (Hughes and Paterson, 1997, p.335). Although critiqued for potentially having too little focus on the materiality of disabling barriers, an approach incorporating embodiment allows materiality of both disabling barriers and impaired bodies (Beckett, 2006b). This may aid the exploration of interactions between disability and impairment effects, as called for by Thomas (1999).

This is helpful for considering impairment as an aspect of human diversity to be no more or less valued than any other. It is also vital for exploring the ableism present in environmentalist contexts and the ability expectations and embodiments which are implied to be natural and/or desirable. It frees the body

from purely ableist theorising (i.e. within an individual and/or medical model) and highlights that bodies are also constructed. This is important to disrupt ideas of what is 'natural'. Siebers (2008) describes how non-disabled people deny their physicality, rendering ableism invisible and thus not recognised by the (non-disabled) elite. The neglect of the body in this way can also be seen in other debates, such as those of citizenship.

In this thesis, the concept of ableism is also used to problematise the embodiment of the so-called 'environmental citizen' (discussed in depth in Chapters Two and Three). Scholars focusing on concepts such as ableism and embodiment have been critiqued for focusing on cultural issues more than economic (see for example Barnes, 2012). Economic issues, however, are not incompatible with ableism and indeed are central to the approach taken by this thesis. It will consider the effects of neoliberal-inspired policies *as well as* the influence that over 30 years of neoliberalism as the dominant economic and political paradigm has had on society more widely. This includes how particular embodiments have been constructed as 'normal', and embodiments that do not fit into this particular construct simultaneously ignored or excluded (see for example Goodley, 2014; Fritsch, 2013).

Although 'ableism' has widely been used as synonymous with 'disablism', particularly in lay contexts, maintaining a distinction between the two is important for this thesis to incorporate the more detailed understandings of ableism laid out above. This is not to suggest that they can always be separated out; they are 'two sides of the same coin' of exclusion. Both are also relevant for this thesis. Exploring and highlighting the exclusion which disabled people face from sustainable lifestyles is a first step to challenging the ableist hegemony (Siebers, 2008) which (as will be demonstrated in later chapters) currently dominates many environmental contexts. As Goodley (2014, p.10) points out: 'a barriers approach to disablism provides a powerful critique of the material base of disability's relationship with its environment'. Ableism, meanwhile, provides a framework for considering why environments and activities have been constructed in particular ways and which embodiments (and which abilities) are currently valued. Therefore a consideration of ableism, using Campbell's and Wolbring's definitions, can be complementary to a social-relational approach to

disability. The two will be used alongside each other to enable wider theorising of disabled people's experiences in this research.

Using the concepts of disability and ableism just discussed, and the standpoints taken by this research, various synergies and tensions can begin to be identified in relation to disability equality and sustainability. The limited understandings of disability that have been employed by academics and policy makers around the issue of sustainability – if disability is considered at all – are a key concern. To identify further overlaps, a deeper discussion of the concept of sustainability is needed.

1.2 Sustainability

Defining sustainability is a daunting task; many competing definitions exist in different literatures and it has been described as 'one of the most contested words in the political vocabulary' (Dobson, 2000, p.62). There are 'multiple sustainabilities' (Leach et al., 2010, p .42) and it is therefore necessary to identify the particular definition being used in specific contexts to make transparent the underlying assumptions and their consequences. Pertinent questions may be 'what it is that sustainability seeks to sustain and for whom' (Alaimo, 2012, p.562).

At its most abstract, if something is sustainable it may be maintained 'at a certain rate or level' (OED, 2012, no pagination). This definition was applied to economic issues thirty years before it became a term of reference for environmental literature and therefore is used in different ways by those with different priorities. For example, the UK's current Coalition government appears equally, if not more likely, to use sustainability in relation to economic growth than to the environment (see for example DEFRA, 2011a), in a similar way to current European Union (EU) strategy. For example, the European Commission's economic strategy document, Europe 2020, has headline priorities of 'smart growth... sustainable growth...' (COM (2010) 2020, final p.5).

Sustainability can thus be used as a normative concept to further particular values, rather than as a merely technical definition (for example Leach et al.,

2010; Neumayer, 2010; Amsler, 2009). Economic growth is only one of the 'three pillars' of sustainability set out by the Brundtland Commission. This United Nations (UN) initiative was instrumental in developing a widely-cited understanding of sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987, p.43). The report produced by the Brundtland Commission highlighted three key factors for achieving sustainability: economic development, social development, and environmental protection. These have not gone un-critiqued, however.

That economic development is included in this definition is problematised by some theorists. For those who view environmental resources as finite, sustainable development – where development means growth – appears unrealistic. Finite resources necessarily mean finite limits to growth and development (Curry, 2011). Because of this, Seghezze (2009) suggests that the inclusion of economic factors in the definition of sustainability undermines its ability to tackle longer term issues such as intergenerational justice. Conversely, Daly and Farley (2011) argue that there need not be a correlation between development and growth. They distinguish between growth as 'a quantitative increase in size' and development as 'the increase in quality' (Daly and Farley, 2011, p.6). The two therefore can, and should, be separated and measured differently. Daly is well known for his concept of a 'steady-state economy' where there is no longer a focus on quantitative growth (see for example Daly, 1992). More recently academics such as Jackson (2011) have enjoyed popular support for similar ideas. Policymakers have taken some note of the finite resources concept – such as the suggestion in the Europe 2020 strategy (COM (2010) 2020, final) to decouple growth from energy use. Steady state ideas are still a minority view, however, and economic growth continues to be a priority.

Environmental protection is also a contested concept within the definition of sustainable development. Two opposing assumptions underlie definitions of environmental protection: anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Anthropocentric positions focus on humanity: 'nature has value if and only if humans value nature' (Neumayer, 2010, p.8). These perspectives are sometimes called light or shallow green, to distinguish them from deep or dark green perspectives that

argue that all nature – human and nonhuman – has value. Therefore, at points of competing interest, human life is not automatically prioritised (Curry, 2011). Neumayer (2010) suggests that these differing assumptions lead to different paradigms of sustainable development – either weak or strong sustainability. The main conflict is based around differing understandings of the concept of ‘substitutability’.

To briefly summarise a complex debate, the question is, assuming that nature is a form of capital or a resource, to what extent – if at all – can it be substituted for by man-made or human capital? Weak forms of sustainability assume that natural capital can be substituted either by existing or future technological progress, or that it is still and will continue to be plentiful. Strong sustainability is more cautious, suggesting that the consequences of exhausting natural capital are largely unknown and that certain types of natural capital are necessary for continuing human life. Additionally, proponents of strong sustainability argue that technological progress cannot substitute for natural capital (Neumayer, 2010). This also links back to the discussion of economic growth above – strong sustainability implies potentially finite resources, whereas weak sustainability fits better with a paradigm of ongoing growth.

The third and final pillar, social development, has until recently been somewhat overlooked in comparison to debates about economic development and environmental protection (Vallance et al., 2011, Wolbring and Rybchinski, 2013). Social sustainability again has competing definitions. Littig and Grießler (2005) suggested that (at the time they were writing) social sustainability had not been adequately theorised or defined. Their contribution to this gap in knowledge was to argue for a reorganisation of work (i.e. paid employment) as essential for social sustainability and environmental protection. It could also address issues of social justice and human dignity, and meet 'an extended set of human needs' (Littig and Grießler, 2005, p.72). Davidson (2009), however, suggests that much theorising on social sustainability has overlooked environmental concerns, emphasising relations *between* people rather than between environments and people.

Meanwhile, Valance and colleagues (2011) describe a typology of three social sustainabilities that they identify in existing literature, drawing on concepts from the social capital literature: 'development', 'bridge', and 'maintenance'.

'Development' social sustainability addresses the need to meet people's basic needs while 'bridge' social sustainability concerns building connections between people and their physical environments. 'Maintenance' social sustainability is about those aspects of current lifestyles we would like to maintain or improve. It is possible to identify potential conflicts between these three types (such as a clash between maintenance and development sustainabilities where one group's maintenance of lifestyle may preclude another group from achieving basic needs, for example in the case of unequal access to housing). Without taking account of these issues, however, social sustainability issues may continue to be pushed aside. Additionally, if social sustainability is not emphasised, the neoliberal paradigm and rhetoric of individualism may lead to it being overlooked (Valance et al., 2011).

Agyeman's concept of 'just sustainability' (Agyeman, 2008) is a different take on these issues, but is also relevant to the discussion. This is because it 'illuminate[s] the radical potential of sustainability' (Walker and Bulkeley, 2006, p.657). Writing from an environmental justice perspective (which will be explained in Chapter Three) he distinguishes two key approaches to sustainability. The first is a classic 'environmental' approach, exemplified by Milbrath's (1989) New Environmental Paradigm. This considers sustainability in terms of weak vs. strong as outlined above (Agyeman, 2008; Agyeman et al., 2002) and features a strong concern for intergenerational equity. The second is an environmental justice paradigm, which arose in the USA from local residents' concerns about unequal exposure to environmental pollutants. It focuses on justice in relation to access to environmental 'goods' and 'bads' (Agyeman, 2008; Agyeman et al., 2002) and intra-generational equity. He argues for a concept of 'just sustainability' which draws from both of these paradigms and focuses on: 'the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems' (Agyeman et al., 2003, p.5). This combines concerns for inter- and intra-generational equity. It is intended to be pluralistic, because precise definitions may shift in different contexts. This definition incorporates social and environmental issues, and also takes economic factors into account in terms of economic inequalities (Agyeman and Evans, 2004). Agyeman and Evans (2003) note that the definition aligns well with a 'strong sustainability'

environmental approach, implying a perspective more akin to that of finite resources and a 'steady state' than continuing economic growth. This concept is useful to highlight synergies between disability equality and sustainability, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

In summary, sustainability is a concept with no agreed definition, and the definitions employed in different contexts seem to relate to an author(s)' political perspective as much as to their primary concern, be it economy, environment, society or a combination of the three. The understanding of sustainability used in this project is intimately related to how disability is understood. As discussed earlier, a social relational approach is taken to disability, and how this interacts with the various aspects of sustainability that have been outlined needs to be explored. Before this, however, it is also necessary to briefly outline two further key concepts relevant to disability equality and sustainability in this thesis: accessibility and environment.

1.3 Accessibility

Accessibility is a key concept for disability studies in terms of considering where disability occurs or is addressed in different environments. As noted earlier, it is a key aspect of disability equality because it is foundational for participation in society. Access is not just about physically reaching and entering spaces but also about associated financial costs, the attitudes of others, and managing costs e.g. financially or in terms of personal health or energy levels (so that access to one activity precludes access to another). The European Commission describes accessibility as 'a broad concept that addresses the removal and prevention of barriers that cause problems for persons with disabilities when using products, services and public infrastructure' (European Commission, 2014, no pagination). Earlier disability studies research discussed accessibility primarily in relation to the immediate physical environment – houses, transport, town centres and so on (for example Barnes, 1991). As ICT (in particular the internet) has grown in popularity and importance, however, this has become a new site of inaccessibility for many, particularly for those with sensory impairments (Dobrinsky and Hargittai, 2006; Barnes, 2000). These understandings relate to those from other disciplines such as geography. Pirie

(1979), for example, highlights that accessibility should not be considered merely in terms of time or space but also as a 'created' phenomenon. This means that individuals have to negotiate between a range of activities and other factors (including different locations for activities) which enable access to one particular activity.

Iwarsson and Stahl (2003) outline the concepts of accessibility, usability and universal design for disability studies. Their exposition is useful here because it highlights that accessibility can be subjective as well as objective. In technical contexts, for example legislation or building regulations, accessibility becomes an objective issue of measurable standards or norms. This can, however, obscure the more subjective viewpoint of whether those standards add up to a space that a particular user finds accessible. Iwarsson and Stahl suggest that the term 'usability' might perform this function, as it begins from individual interpretations: 'the importance of being aware of personal needs and environmental challenges and their influence on functional and task performance levels' (Iwarsson and Stahl, 2003, p.60). This adds an extra dimension to Pirie's definition of accessibility above.

Iwarsson and Stahl (2003) also distinguish between 'traditional design' and 'universal design'. Rather than treating accessibility as an add-on, with disabled people considered as different from the 'norm' (of traditional design), 'universal design' integrates accessibility from the start. The 'norm' is considered to be a population with differing characteristics, including impairments, and 'usability' is also a concern. In this way universal design is a potential solution for issues of accessibility and usability. Universal design has foundations in the US civil rights movement, and emerged in part as a reaction to the limitations of 'barrier-free environments' implemented by various legislation (Hamraie, 2013; Imrie, 2012). It has a broad literature which can only be briefly referenced here.

Key features of universal design are: a focus on accessibility beyond wheelchair users; a consideration for the aesthetics of accessible design; inclusive rather than segregated access; and the focus on accessibility as integral to design, as highlighted by Iwarsson and Stahl (2003). At face value this appears to align well with the objective of facilitating disability equality. Various critiques have noted, however, that in its current form universal design may not reach this goal. With its focus on design and technological solutions, universal design risks

depoliticising the concerns of justice that are interlinked with inaccessible environments (Imrie, 2012). Imrie suggests that this narrow focus reduces the problems faced by disabled people to physical environments, missing other access issues such as social and organisational barriers.

Furthermore, universal design seems to be operating on a logic of market-based solutions (Hamraie, 2013; Imrie, 2012). This is problematic because of its potential for synthesis within (rather than challenge to) a neoliberal paradigm, which has already been implicated in the reproduction of disability. A final relevant issue is that those working in this area have not yet produced a detailed definition of what they mean by 'universal'. This means there are still potential tensions between the need for the universal and for the specific, for example allowing design elements that cater for users with particular needs (Imrie, 2012). This leads to the danger of missing the difference between objective and subjective understandings of accessibility, returning to Iwarsson and Stahl's definitions above. It seems, then, that while universal design ideas may have potential for accessibility, an uncritical universal design approach would be problematic.

Universal design overlaps with the research interests of this thesis, particularly where it has been linked with sustainable design (see for example Gossett et al., 2009; Heylighen, 2008). Heylighen discusses the challenges of engaging architects to take this kind of work forward, while Gossett and colleagues provide a case study of an attempt to synthesise sustainable and universal design aims in a building project. While this kind of work is positive, it is also relevant to note that, in the light of Imrie's (2012) critique regarding the focus on technological and market solutions, the form of sustainability universal design fits most well within is likely to be weak sustainability. This has further implications for its potential to address disability equality, as will be discussed further on. As noted above, however, it is also limited because accessibility in this research is being explored more widely, encompassing not just physical, time and spatial factors but also social and relational circumstances and decisions.

To summarise this discussion of accessibility, key issues of relevance are the two understandings of accessibility as objective measurable standards as well as subjective individual interpretations. This is because not every potential user

of a space will want to access it, and individual choice is important. Equally, however, making sure that a space is accessible should an individual wish to use it, regardless of whether or not they currently do so, is critical. Now, however, a central linking point between disability equality and sustainability – the environment – will be discussed.

1.4 Environment(s)

'Environment' is relevant to both disability equality and sustainability, as it has been a common topic of investigation in the fields of disability studies and sustainability. Although a potential area of synergy, its definition in the two fields has been somewhat different. In disability studies, particularly from a social perspective, 'environment' is a central focus of research as a major site of oppression for disabled people. This may be anything from the immediate space a person is occupying, both physically and socially, to much wider contexts an individual might encounter. An important site for research has been the built environment – from houses to cities – and the barriers encountered by disabled people navigating those spaces (for example Gray et al., 2003; Barnes, 1991).

The natural environment has also been of interest in this context, particularly with regard to leisure and tourism (see for example Mullick, 1993; National Council on Disability, 1992). This research and theorising is anthropocentric (i.e. human-centred); concerned with individuals' access to and 'fit' (Iwarsson and Stahl, 2003) within particular spaces. The natural environment is also relevant for disability studies in terms of the psychological and physiological benefits such access might provide for disabled (and non-disabled) individuals.

Consideration of the environment for its own sake, for example its health and continued functioning as an entity beyond human existence, has largely been the preserve of natural scientists (Irwin, 2001). Although this thesis is situated in the social sciences, the growing physical scientific evidence for human-made climate change and environmental damage (see for example IPCC, 2013) means this latter understanding of environment – and its impacts on people and

society – have become increasingly relevant. Examples of this include public understandings of and engagement with environmental issues (see for example Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Eden, 1993), as well as more philosophical questions about the relationship between humans and the natural environment (for example Alaimo, 2010).

It is also important to point out that understandings of the natural environment are not uncontested, however. Irwin describes environment as a 'created and interpreted' phenomenon encompassing 'a subtle and overlapping relationship between the material and social worlds' (Irwin, 2001, p.3). This implies significant potential for different interpretations. Cronon's (1996) problematisation of the concept of wilderness – a form of natural environment – is a good example of this. He charts the transformation of 'wilderness' in North American history from feared (and fearsome) other into an elite playground frequented by the rich. National parks were created by removing their native inhabitants and erasing these people's histories, constructing a so-called 'virgin' landscape. This has parallels with UK history (as well as other parts of the world) here also, where forced land clearances and enclosures (see for example Brockington and Igoe, 2006) have created the countryside we recognise today. Cronon (1996) associates the North American history of wilderness as deeply intertwined with its history of frontiers, and the extreme masculinity of early settlers battling to survive. This is echoed by modern day anarcho-primitivists who advocate a return to hunter-gatherer lifestyles as resistance and response to an unsustainable society (Graeber, 2009).

Cronon (1996) argues that the privileging of wilderness over other forms of nature can lead to a neglect of the more mundane, even though most of our current environmental problems start 'at home'. It also creates an unnecessary dualism between domestic green spaces and wilderness. He also acknowledges, however, that 'natural' environments such as wilderness are not *only* constructed. Similarly, Macnaghten and Urry (1998) argue that, while individuals produce and reproduce what is considered natural via their practices, nature has an external reality. This is also important; Leach and colleagues (2010) note with regard to policy-making processes that nature can become an 'actant'. Relationships between people and their environments are apparent in policies surrounding issues of energy and water, for example. While

environmentalists often over-emphasise the separation and difference of humans and nature (Beck, 2010), 'the porosity of human bodies to other living things' (Clark, 2010, p.47) is visible in the way humanity as a species has experienced environmental change since the earliest days of our existence.

This is an area of potential synergy between disability equality and sustainability – demonstrating that understandings of concepts such as 'natural' cannot be taken for granted. Kafer (2013), for example, explores the relations between the materialities of bodies and of nature. She highlights assumptions about human bodies that are implicit within the way 'natural' environments are framed and maintained by non-disabled people. In contrast to this, she describes a 'crip interaction with nature' (Kafer, 2013, p.142) which consciously engages with the limits of the body. These discussions also raise questions about what we mean when talking about the environment, and which environments are considered worthy of protection or candidates for adaptation towards accessibility. There may be a potential tension between aims of sustainability and accessibility where so-called 'natural' environments are concerned, for example over whether it is justifiable to construct an accessible path in an area of natural beauty (Kafer, 2013; Nocella, 2012a; Mace et al., 2004). These kinds of tensions are likely to arise where the social aspects of disability equality and sustainability are not emphasised. The chapter now returns to disability equality and sustainability for further discussion of potential synergies and tensions.

1.5 Disability equality and sustainability – bringing the concepts together

The understandings of disability and disability equality adopted in this research raise significant questions relating to sustainability. There is significant complexity around differing and contested understandings of disability and sustainability, and differing implications of these understandings for identifying and addressing the relevant issues. Rittel and Webber's (1973) concept of 'wicked problems' is a useful way to consider this complexity – although it is acknowledged that this is just one of a number of ways to conceptualise

complex issues (Spruijt et al., 2013). Wicked problems – the type Rittel and Webber suggest characterise many social planning problems – have a number of key features which separate them from ‘tame problems’ such as those found within natural sciences. Ten key characteristics of wicked problems are identified; these lend support to the idea that achieving sustainability and disability equality may also be understood as wicked problems. A key issue is that wicked problems do not fit the ‘logical’ approach of natural science – they have no single definition (or even agreed way of deciding on a definition). There is no way of adequately defining solutions (which tend to be interdependent with problem definitions) or end points, or testing hypotheses without causing actual impacts. Uncertainty and competing values mean that any decisions or definitions are inherently political.

Climate change has been presented as a ‘wicked problem’ by many authors (for example Urry, 2013; Hoffman, 2011) and similar arguments can be made for addressing the issue of sustainability more generally. For example, as seen earlier, defining sustainability depends significantly on the reader’s political perspective, it has interdependent aspects in terms of causes and solutions, solutions are complex and characterised by uncertainty, and results are hard to prove (Hoffman, 2011). Similarly, aspects of disability equality have been characterised as wicked problems – such as policy approaches to dealing with autism (Stace, 2011) or inclusion (Tucker, 2010). Achieving disability equality as a matter of sustainability can also be cast as a ‘wicked problem’ because again the definition of disability – and therefore the potential problems and solutions identified – is contested and political.

In some respects this means the search for solutions to these issues will always be contestable. Therefore there is a need for transparency of approach throughout this thesis to allow different readers to come to their own conclusions. Additionally, however, it means that suggested solutions will always be inherently political and thus must be understood as such. For example, it is possible to see different implications for disability equality in the various definitions of sustainability discussed earlier. Considering the concepts of weak and strong sustainability (Neumayer, 2010) some pertinent issues in relation to achieving disability equality are raised. These opposing concepts have already been critiqued more generally in regard to weak sustainability’s

over focus on economy and strong sustainability's neglect of social and equality concerns (Walker and Bulkeley, 2006). This critique can also be considered in relation to disability equality.

Weak sustainability indicates a concern with the environment only to the extent that it is relevant to human wellbeing or advancement. It is usually optimistic about the potential for technological progress to solve existing and future environmental problems. This fits well within a neoliberal economic paradigm. Current society, operating under such a paradigm, has also been shown to be disabling by many disability studies theorists and researchers (see for example Swain et al., 2013) and key features of neoliberalism are also implicated in the maintenance of disability (Wilton and Schuer, 2006; Barnes, 2005). Therefore, under a weak sustainability approach, a neoliberal economy is prioritised, perpetuating disability. As noted earlier, this also has potential implications for a universal design approach, because in its current form it may not challenge the status quo. This, along with other critiques highlighted, means universal design has less relevance for this thesis.

Similarly, it has been suggested that the achievements of both disability and environmental movements in recent years have been limited because they operate within a neoliberal paradigm (Imrie and Thomas, 2008). The individualism that a neoliberal approach promotes is problematic because it affects how disability is understood by wider society and also creates an artificial distinction between humanity and the natural world (Alaimo, 2010; Leipoldt, 2006). Individualism may also encourage competing rights claims between different groups rather than collective organising (Imrie and Thomas, 2008).

Under a strong sustainability approach, however, human life is not prioritised over non-human life. There is pessimism about the ability of technology to answer environmental problems, and a concern that some environmental damage is irreparable; some forms of nature are irreplaceable. A strong sustainability approach fits with the 'steady state' economic strategy described earlier. This has been critiqued for potentially leading to a less equal society (in the sense of gender, disability, and BME rights) because of the likelihood of increased scarcity of resources in such a context (Quilley, 2013). A strong sustainability approach is often associated with the more radical side of

environmental activism which rejects current dominant economic (and sometimes political) system(s). Those subscribing to this type of belief often attempt to distance themselves from mainstream societal values and live their lives in ways they consider environmentally sustainable. Examples of this include some intentional communities (Sargisson, 2009) as well as, at the more extreme end, some who define as anarcho-primitivists, described earlier.

These types of lifestyle, as Cronon (1996) points out, are often linked to a kind of 'heroic' vision of humanity as rugged and independent, as well as to a particular valorisation of the 'natural'. Traditional social hierarchies may re-assert themselves in these contexts leading to increased interpersonal violence (Quilley, 2013). Additionally, access to healthcare may be limited in 'off the grid' contexts and there is often an implication of 'survival of the fittest' (Sargisson, 2009). These are examples of ableism; implicitly valuing a particular 'able' embodiment. These ideas have the potential to further the oppression disabled people face, or to create tensions between the priorities of disability equality and the natural environment. They imply competing understandings of sustainability as inaccessible on the one hand – requiring an 'able' body and minimal reliance on social goods such as healthcare – and accessibility as unsustainable on the other – particularly where accessibility involves the labour of other individuals and/or energy-consuming technological aids.

Both visions of weak and strong sustainability often appear to underemphasise the social implications of sustainability (although for an exception see Baker who notes the need for 'bottom up community structures' and 'equitable participation' (Baker, 2006, p.30-31) in her description of strong sustainable development.). They also seem to share an individualistic understanding of humanity and prize a traditional view of independence – i.e. doing things without assistance. Disabled people, however, have presented an alternative definition of independence which is not exclusive of disabled people. This alternative definition emphasises autonomy, choice and control, as the key factors in independence (see for example Oliver, 1990). This might also be termed 'interdependence', which is characteristic of many disabled people's experiences (Leipoldt, 2006). Without this understanding, disabled people seem to be disadvantaged by both weak and strong sustainability.

This, however, is only the case where they neglect a social understanding of sustainability. Social sustainability, in particular using Vallance and colleagues' concept of 'development social sustainability', makes it possible to argue that equality for disabled people is an aspect of achieving social sustainability. It can be argued that definitions of 'sustainability' (un-prefaced by 'environmental' or 'economic') that do not include the social may not be truly sustainable.

Therefore sustainability that does not lead to disability equality is also argued to be unsustainable. Alternatively, the concept of just sustainability allows disability as a social justice issue (and as an environmental justice issue, which will be discussed in Chapter Three) to be neatly combined with concern for environmental sustainability (Agyeman and Evans, 2003). It also goes beyond the social sustainability definitions provided by Vallance and colleagues (2011) in which issues of wellbeing are only addressed in terms of basic needs, but in answer to Davidson's (2009) critique firmly situates its own form of social sustainability in the context of environmental sustainability. In terms of this research, it is the potential synergies between disability equality and sustainability that are considered to be of most value. They can indicate solutions to tensions that appear. For example, they highlight that social understandings of both concepts can potentially resolve many of the conflicts that arise when these aspects are underemphasised.

For example, the materialist understanding of disability (described at the start of this chapter), views the current economic system – focused on productivity and perpetual economic development (growth) – as centrally implicated in the oppression disabled people face. It may also be argued, however, that technological progress, associated with economic development, has sometimes played a part in increasing accessibility and quality of life for disabled people. There may also be other potentially beneficial applications of technology yet to be invented (although technology is often designed without consideration of accessibility – Goggin and Newell, 2007; Barnes, 2000). Additionally, alternatives explored in contexts such as intentional communities, for example, still hold almost neo-liberalist expectations of members contributing as workers, often in manual roles – something from which certain groups of disabled people may be excluded. Sargisson's (2009) work highlighted that individuals living in current intentional communities found aspects of unearned privilege

reproduced. They also highlighted difficulties accessing medical attention, limited electricity and a return to potentially oppressive gender roles. For disabled people with particular impairments who rely on external power sources for mobility, oxygen, communication or other basic needs these alternatives are therefore (at least currently) exclusionary. Therefore, while some aspects of strong *and* weak sustainability approaches have value from a social understanding of disability, it can also highlight aspects of both that are problematic for disability equality.

Curry (2011) suggests that there may be a potential 'third way' between competing visions of technological or 'good life'-style futures. He proposes that technological advances should not be discarded *or* exploited for consumption and gain, and advocates for the need for further discussion of how technologies are used. This argument brings together the aspects of sustainability with the most possibilities for disability equality. This again can be linked in with the concept of just sustainability where technologies can provide a better quality of life but also fit within ecological limits.

It seems clear, then, that a key issue in the search for synergies and tensions between disability equality and sustainability are the underlying assumptions made. For example, there are synergies between a social understanding of disability equality and an understanding of sustainability that adequately emphasises the social as well as environmental and economic aspects. Agyeman's concept of just sustainability fits well here in terms of a central concern for social justice. Conversely, there are clear tensions between a 'strong sustainability' approach and disability equality because of the former's lack of attention to social issues, and similarly between a 'weak sustainability' approach that is based on business-as-usual, which already does not pay adequate attention to achieving disability equality. Although few mainstream sustainability debates explicitly mention disability, the implication of the arguments made (in the absence of any discussion) is of an individual understanding of disability.

While disability studies has explored environmental issues in more depth than sustainability has considered disability, the disability studies approach is also problematic. As noted in the previous section, disability studies' concern with environment has often only extended as far as its potential for accessibility is

concerned – implying an anthropocentric viewpoint. Although it may be appropriate for disability studies to remain broadly anthropocentric, an explicit acknowledgement of the value of the environment *beyond* accessibility would enable engagement with sustainability debates. For example this might mean explicit recognition of the natural environment as sustaining life, and an understanding of the interdependence of humans and nature (e.g. Leopoldt, 2006) as a basis for disabled people's involvement with transitions toward sustainability. This could challenge some of the lack of emphasis on social factors discussed above. These arguments will be explored in more depth in relation to policy in Chapter Two and environmental justice and environmental citizenship literatures in Chapter Three. For now, however, this chapter concludes with an examination of existing research which has begun to jointly address disability equality and sustainability.

1.6 Existing research

Researchers and theorists have considered various issues relating to disability equality and sustainability. This section aims to outline existing work and to position this research project as an original contribution to the literature for its particular combination and understandings of these concepts. Imrie and Thomas (2008) were among the first to point out parallels between, but also the relative isolation of, the two research areas. Key issues identified were common concerns such as social justice and similar topics of interest such as citizenship and contested understandings and roles of nature and technology (Imrie and Thomas, 2008).

In other work attempting to map the literature, a number of areas of overlap between concerns of disability equality and sustainability were identified (Fenney and Snell, 2011). During the course of this thesis more relevant literature, research and policy have emerged, reinforcing the argument that there are key synergies between disability equality and sustainability that need to be – and are beginning to be – explored. One area of ongoing work considers the impacts of climate change on disabled people. For example, disabled people's experiences of disaster relief, during climate change-related disasters

such as flooding or extreme temperatures, have been highlighted by a number of development organisations as well as academics (International Disability and Development Consortium, 2012; Wolbring, 2009; Hemingway and Priestley, 2006).

Much of this work focuses on the majority world context where the effects of climate change-related events are (and are predicted to be) experienced most severely (World Resources Institute et al., 2011). Again however there are exceptions, for example work relating to Hurricane Katrina (as well as other weather events) in the USA (see for example Wolbring, 2009). Unequal exposure to climate change impacts is also highlighted by this literature. Additionally, there is recognition of these issues in the UK context in relation to flooding (e.g. Walker and Burningham, 2011). This literature will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Three in relation to issues of environmental justice.

Access in the natural environment (and green spaces more generally) for disabled people in the UK and USA, outside of disaster contexts, is also an existing site of research. Although this is in some ways a logical progression from considering access to the built environment, it is also vital to sustainability concerns. This is because access to nature and natural environments is considered to be a strong basis for environmental concerns due to its potential to develop an individual's environmental knowledge (DEFRA, 2008b). Examples of research and reports on this issue in the UK come from government agencies such as DEFRA (2008b) and the Countryside Agency (2005a, 2005b), NGOs such as Natural England (2008), as well as from those within academia, for example Mathers (2008) and Tregaskis (2004). The Countryside Agency (2005c) point out that at the time of writing there were no legal standards around outdoor access (although this has since changed). Barriers identified include inaccessible transport to and around the natural environment and inaccessible information, as well as inadequately maintained paths at sites, a lack of step-free access and/or accessible toilets, and negative interactions with other users of the space, for example cyclists (see for example Mathers, 2008; Natural England, 2008).

A variant on this work is that which looks at the importance of the natural environment for enhancing physical and mental wellbeing – and potentially minimising impairment. These effects may help to alleviate distress in people

with mental health conditions (Mind, 2007), or maximise the physical and mental health of disabled people more generally (Thrive, 2009). Similarly, it is argued by Rocha and colleagues (2012) that individuals' perceptions of their local environment are linked with the prevalence of mental health conditions (that is, perceiving more environmental problems, for example a lack of green space, is correlated with a higher likelihood of experiencing mental ill health). This research links into a wider literature on the health effects of various kinds of environmental damage, for example pollution (e.g. van Kraayenoord, 2008; Koger et al., 2005) or climate-related disasters (e.g. Page and Howard, 2010). More isolated examples of the consideration of disability are scattered through different literatures. Imrie and Thomas (2008) brought together a number of disability-related papers in a special issue of a journal looking at topics as diverse as architecture (Heylighen, 2008), transport (Aldred and Woodcock, 2008) and ageing (Landorf et al., 2008). Others have considered issues of ethics such as increased resource use (Reed, 1997) or practicalities of climate change effects exacerbating impairments (e.g. Summers, 2009). These were identified along with grey and non-academic literature in the earlier literature mapping exercise (Fenney and Snell, 2011).

Some disability studies academics have recently begun to examine issues of disability and sustainability in a more theoretical context. Two key figures here are Wolbring and Nocella, both associated with disability studies in the USA. Wolbring's work spans a wide range of topics, but of particular relevance here is his work – in collaboration with others – linking ability studies with sustainability issues (e.g. Wolbring et al., 2013; Wolbring and Rybchinski, 2013). As described earlier in this chapter, Wolbring (2008) has argued that ability studies extends more broadly than disability studies in that it encompasses the valuing of particular abilities, not limited to those inaccessible to disabled people. One example of this is how, in current US and UK societies, productivity and competitiveness are valued more highly than empathy and care. Ableism may therefore be used against disabled people where 'species-typical normative abilities' (Wolbring, 2008, p.253) are valued, but also potentially against other minority groups in different contexts – for example women, or the financially disadvantaged, as described previously. Wolbring has used this lens to explore a number of relevant issues such as the impacts of climate change and energy

insecurity on disabled people (Wolbring et al., 2013; Wolbring and Leopatra, 2012) and education for sustainable development (Wolbring and Burke, 2013). Wolbring and Rybchinski (2013) suggest an ability studies approach, as well as a disability studies approach, has potential for considering issues of social sustainability. Disability issues are relatively invisible in existing literature on social sustainability, and there is a need for specific indicators relevant to disabled people's lives that should be included in measures of social sustainability. Similarly, an ability studies approach is needed in future work to examine which abilities are valued or devalued within social sustainability approaches and the implications this has for disabled people. As demonstrated by this description of his work, Wolbring's continuing theorising around issues of disability and sustainability is salient for this thesis, although to date his work has been mostly theoretical or literature-based rather than empirical.

Nocella (2012a, 2012b), by contrast, writes from the position of a scholar-activist, having engaged with disability and environmental issues both in academia and in practice. Nocella coined the term 'eco-ability', which he describes as 'a philosophy that respects differences in abilities while promoting values appropriate to the stewardship of ecosystems' (Nocella, 2012, p.186). Although still a fledgling concept, it has echoes in other post-humanist theories such as Alaimo's 'transcorporeality' (Alaimo, 2010, p.2). Alaimo argues that (human) bodies and nature are always already intertwined, using (among others) the example of people living with multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS), despite a western neoliberal tendency to over-individualise humanity.

Gabrielson and Parady (2010) suggest that this inherent liminality is key for proposing a shared basis from which to act to protect the natural environment. It is not difficult to see how these ideas also cross over with Wolbring's and suggest the potential for exploring the ability expectations implicated in a more ecocentric world view (Wolbring, 2014). This will be useful as a theoretical concept to consider in the light of the research findings. It has the potential to examine the ability expectations embedded in the contexts and experiences participants describe, but also to explore the possibility for a set of more inclusive and sustainable ability expectations.

Beyond academia, some disabled people have also started to write about their own experiences with the environment, or of attempting to live out their beliefs

around environmental sustainability. Ansell (2005), Brignell (2007, 2009) and Pepper (2007), writing for various online publications, all describe tensions experienced between their access needs and sustainability concerns (discussed further in Fenney and Snell, 2011). More recently one blogger, disabledmedic (2012), coined the term 'ecodisablism' to describe her experiences. She discusses how she has internalised individualised environmental messages about, for example, cycling and veganism, and therefore feels like a failure when she is unable to live up to these standards due to access or impairment issues. She suggests this internalisation often arises from binary messages in environmental campaigns e.g. bikes good/cars bad. Ecodisablism has been picked up by other disabled bloggers to describe their own experiences of not being able to live up to mainstream competitive green ideals – particularly around transport (e.g. smith, 2012). From these descriptions, it seems likely that ecodisablism is an example of what Campbell (2008b) describes as 'internalised ableism', where societal expectations based around 'normal' abilities are taken on board by the disabled person leading to a sense of shame and potentially a desire to perform in relation to these ableist expectations. Ecodisablism will also be explored in relation to the research findings later in this thesis.

A small number of pieces of research have begun to explore issues around disabled people's understandings of, and experiences with, aspects of sustainable lifestyles in a UK context. One was also identified from New Zealand (Lovelock, 2010) and is included here because it has relevant findings, although the different context must be borne in mind. Before this project began, seven pieces of relevant research were identified. A further two have been published during the course of this research. The first study of this type was conducted by Beazley and colleagues (1997). They investigated the experiences of disabled people in relation to environmental education, focusing specifically on a conservation course attended by a mix of disabled and non-disabled students and run by a conservation charity. Two other studies considered disabled people's environmental experiences and concerns more generally alongside those of other disadvantaged groups (Adebowale et al., 2009; Burningham and Thrush, 2001). One study (Lovelock, 2010) aimed to explore disabled people's environmental concerns and behaviours as compared

with those of non-disabled people. A further two pieces of research (already mentioned) considered disabled people's environmental concerns and experiences specifically in relation to the natural environment (Mathers, 2008; Countryside Agency, 2005a), and the seventh piece of research examined the environmental involvement of members of a Deaf Club (Charles and Thomas, 2007).

The first piece of research published since this project started (and referencing some of the earlier review findings in Fenney and Snell, 2011) was a scoping study conducted by one disabled and one non-disabled researcher (this is mentioned because the disability status of the researchers was not discussed in any of the earlier pieces of research). It involved two focus groups with disabled people considering understandings, experiences and insights regarding environmental issues (Abbott and Porter, 2013). The second piece was an investigation of accessibility in sustainable communities – focusing on physical access – again conducted by a disabled researcher (Bhakta, 2013). This piece is somewhat different from the rest described here as it incorporates an ethnography of visiting various sustainable communities and focuses on the views of predominantly non-disabled participants who were involved with the planning of, or who visited, particular sites.

With the exception of these latter studies and Lovelock's (2010) quantitative questionnaire-based research, none of the research projects found their disabled participants to have high levels of knowledge or concern about the environment. The exception to this was immediate local environmental issues, such as a lack of recycling bins provided by the Local Authority (Adebowale et al., 2009), built environment accessibility issues, or vandalism (Burningham and Thrush, 2001). Probably related to this, however, were participants' concerns about the lack of accessible information available regarding environmental issues (Adebowale et al., 2009; Mathers, 2008; Countryside Agency, 2005a; Beazley et al., 1997). Other communication barriers included a lack of people with good knowledge of British Sign Language, e.g. when attending environmental projects or meetings (Charles and Thomas, 2007; Beazley et al., 1997). The earlier studies therefore were mostly limited to discussing local environmental issues – relating both to accessibility and to environmental damage e.g. air pollution – while Abbot and Porter's (2013) research focused

more on broader issues of climate change and environmental sustainability. Although it will be argued in this thesis that low levels of knowledge or concern about the wider environment are not a feature of disability per se, it has been pointed out that broad environmental concern can be considered a feature of privilege. Therefore it may not always be present among disadvantaged groups because of their increased need to focus primarily on the difficulties encountered in their everyday lives and environments (Clarke and Agyeman, 2011).

Physical accessibility was a key issue in every study. There were a range of barriers, such as access to and around green spaces (Mathers, 2008; Countryside Agency, 2005). This incorporated problems relating to public transport e.g. broken bus ramps (Adebowale et al., 2009) or simply a lack of services in more rural areas (Burningham and Thrush, 2001). Similarly, Lovelock (2010) found that increasing physical impairment correlated with decreased levels of pro-environmental behaviour, and that those living in residential care also participated in less pro-environmental activities. Inaccessible meeting spaces and inaccessible recycling facilities were also highlighted by participants in Abbot and Porter's (2013) research. Bhakta (2013) noted various aspects of sustainable buildings that, although built with environmental impact in mind, had reduced access for disabled people. Examples included higher thresholds at entrances or heavier triple-glazed windows (both of which improve heat retention). Her analysis indicated that the majority of aspects of the communities she researched were unconsciously designed around 'able' bodies.

Organisational barriers were also highlighted; for example council tenants not having control over whether energy efficiency measures were installed in their properties (Adebowale et al., 2009) or local authorities missing the needs of Deaf people when considering accessibility issues because Deaf clubs, unlike local authorities, do not necessarily operate based on geographical location, i.e. groups made up of members from different areas (Charles and Thomas, 2007). Similarly, a lack of consideration for evacuating disabled people from buildings in emergencies or not being able to take essential oxygen supplies on buses were barriers to involvement (Abbot and Porter, 2013). The concept of permaculture adopted by some sustainable communities (with its associations

of self-sufficiency and unrestricted 'nature') was also shown to have negative implications for accessibility (Bhakta, 2013). The flipside of these kinds of barriers was that for certain individuals, a lack of control led to almost compulsory environmental action. For the disabled course members in Beazley and colleagues' (1997) study, participation was often decided or promoted by social workers or other professionals rather than the individuals themselves.

Like the majority of studies just described, this research also seeks to investigate the environmental concerns and experiences of disabled people in the UK *from* the perspectives of disabled people. Considering the focus on disability equality and sustainability, it is argued that if a full understanding of sustainability is used – that is, assuming the equal importance of economic, environmental and social factors, such as just sustainability – then disability equality can be understood as a key constituent part of sustainability. From this perspective, access issues experienced by disabled people in relation to sustainable lifestyles need to be more comprehensively compiled and highlighted than has been the case in the previous studies. The aim is to make the case to those outside the field of disability studies that this is a significant issue that has so far been missed, as well as to highlight the importance of environmental sustainability within disability studies.

As noted by Fenney and Snell (2011) and developed by Abbott and Porter (2013), disabled people's insights into how to create a more accessible and sustainable environment are of great value. Furthermore, it is vital to make sure that different experiences of disability are explored to avoid the danger of disability being treated as a tick-box exercise (Charles and Thomas, 2007). This means attempting to go further than Burningham and Thrush's (2001) and Adebowale and colleagues' (2009) studies which only included economically disadvantaged disabled people, or the Countryside Agency's (2005a) research which considered disabled people across different types of impairment but only in relation to concerns with and access to the natural environment. Therefore who is recruited and how findings are analysed will be important, as will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed key concepts in this research and considered the potential synergies and tensions that arise between disability equality and sustainability, including related aspects of ableism, accessibility and the environment. The particular understandings used in this research have also been discussed. The standpoint taken by this research is influenced by social understandings of disability equality and sustainability, and this highlights gaps in theorising in both fields. The general territories of existing relevant research have also been outlined to begin to situate this research and its potential contribution to knowledge. This will continue over the following two chapters. In the next chapter, the relevant policy contexts will be considered. The framing of disability equality and sustainability at different policy levels will be highlighted, as well as the potential synergies and tensions identified in this chapter which emerge from the understandings employed.

2 Disability Equality and Sustainability in Policy

This chapter considers how disability equality and sustainability are operationalised and understood in policy discourses, building on the work of the previous chapter. Relevant policies promoting sustainability and disability equality will be interrogated to consider positions on these issues at global, EU, and the UK levels. International and EU policies are referenced for context and to demonstrate their relevance (or lack thereof) for UK policy. This multi-level approach considers to what extent policy at different levels uses social understandings of – and approaches to – disability equality and sustainability, as well as alternative understandings that might be embedded therein. It is acknowledged that policy responses are only one of many ways to promote disability equality and sustainability, and issues affecting implementation will also be discussed.

Understandings of disability equality and sustainability that respectively underlie various policies will be highlighted. Additionally, in this thesis it is relevant to examine the various roles of different actors set out in policy – in particular which responsibilities and characteristics are attributed to citizens. In this context, it is then possible to consider where and how disabled people are situated within policy discourses. It is also relevant to consider if, or to what extent, ableist assumptions (as discussed in the previous chapter) may be detected in the policies. It is suggested that, despite the connections that will be highlighted in policies between concerns of individual citizens and environmental protection, this is not an area that has yet been widely considered by those in the field of disability studies. This contrasts with other areas of policy such as employment, housing or education. A central argument of this thesis, therefore, is that policies addressing sustainability have just as much relevance to disabled people's lives – and to goals of disability equality – as these other areas of policy. Therefore it is important that disability studies continues to expand on this as a key area of inquiry.

2.1 Identifying policies

Issues relating to disability equality and sustainability are addressed in a diverse range of policies and legislation at every level. Given the 'three pillars' definition of sustainability discussed in the previous chapter, all policies on environmental, economic and social issues were potentially relevant. To manage the scope of this review, however, and because economic concerns are referenced in many of the environmental and social policies, only those explicitly referencing issues of sustainable development or environmental protection have been included. Similarly, while social issues encompass a wide range of policies, only those whose major focus was disability issues were included.

Policies were identified using UN, EU and UK government websites, internet searches, and 'snowballing' from various policies which referenced previous or related policies at the same or different levels. Even within the limits described above, a comprehensive review is beyond the scope of this chapter; instead policies were chosen based on key criteria. For this research, the relevant key issues for sustainability-focused policies were those that addressed the 'everyday' – such as domestic consumption, waste-handling and travel activities (Soderholm, 2010) – or which related to general citizen involvement, and which have relevance for the UK context (although in some cases this may be implicit). This chapter does not explore policy at the local level; this will be addressed along with the empirical research. Because local policy varies considerably between different authorities in the UK, a specific locality was chosen for the empirical research, and the policies from this local authority will be examined in depth as part of the findings. This will allow local policies to be considered in relation to those at broader scales.

Policies discounted were related to technical or specialist issues, e.g. technical standards for energy generation, or primarily non-human foci e.g. biodiversity. While it could be argued that these do have relevance, they are less likely to have direct relevance to individuals' lives and experiences. With disability-focused policies, those chosen addressed issues of accessibility or disability equality, and the focus was on those relating to aspects of sustainability. Because every issue had potential relevance to sustainability, critical examples have been chosen to highlight specific points. The following analysis will

consider issues of sustainability, disability equality, and interrelations between the two. First, however, the policies identified at different levels will be briefly outlined.

2.2 Policies promoting sustainability

2.2.1 Global

The United Nations (UN) was the key source of international policy and strategy on sustainability. Because of the global implications of environmental issues, a global organisation seems well-placed to address them. Sustainable development, for example, emerged as a key concept from the WCED in 1987 and was 'agenda-ised' by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or Earth Summit, held at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1992 (Agyeman et al., 2002). This in turn led to the formation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (UN, 1992), the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992 (UNEP, 2014) and Agenda 21 (UN, 1992), among others. The UNFCCC – itself non-binding – led to the formation of the Kyoto Protocol (UN, 1998), which set legally binding targets for emissions reduction over the period 2007-2012 that varied for different countries depending on their circumstances. The Doha amendment (UN, 2012a) set further targets for the period 2013 – 2020, after the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference at Copenhagen failed to establish any legally binding targets or commitments beyond 2013.

The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, by contrast, were non-binding. Agenda 21 was a voluntary programme of action on sustainable development, built upon the principles set out by the Rio declaration, and was implemented in some countries as Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Both addressed social and economic as well as environmental implications of sustainable development. A Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 1993, and various follow-up conferences have considered the progress of Agenda 21. Most recently, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development was held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, known as Rio+20 (UN, 2012b). The Rio+20 agreement sets out a renewed

commitment to goals of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Like Agenda 21, however, this is also non-binding.

Another key UN strategy is the Millennium Declaration, more commonly known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were developed from the objectives within it. These were agreed in 2000 at the Millennium Summit (UNDP, 2014) although they are again non-binding (Fukuda-Parr, 2004). The MDGs are eight headline development goals to be achieved by 2015. Each of these contains a number of measurable targets, for example goal seven – ‘Ensure environmental sustainability’ – has targets for integrating sustainable development into national policies and significantly reducing biodiversity loss. Some targets have been achieved, such as halving 'the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day' (UN, 2014, p.8) and 'halving the proportion of people without access to an improved drinking water source' (UN, 2014, p.4). Others are on target to be achieved, but a significant majority are unlikely to have been reached by 2015 (UN, 2014). A follow-up strategy – or post-2015 development agenda – is currently being consulted on in preparation for the 2015 summit. This will include sustainable development goals that are being developed from the Rio+20 outcome document.

A final relevant UN body is the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) which produced the Aarhus Convention (the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters) in 1998 (UNECE, 1998). This aims to increase the rights of individual citizens to knowledge and a good environment and deals with relations between citizens and states in this regard.

2.2.2 EU

At the EU level, environmental protection (article 37) is a tenet of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Communities, 2000). Article 37 calls for 'a high level of environmental protection and the improvement of the quality of the environment... in accordance with the principle of sustainable development'. It is thus a central theme in the current overall strategy for the EU, EU2020. EU2020 succeeded the Lisbon Strategy, in place from 2000 to 2010, and set out a plan for the next decade of the European

Union. The main document, Europe 2020, focuses on the economic future of Europe and aims to develop a 'smart, sustainable and inclusive economy' (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.5). This economic strategy document also links in with similar documents focused on specific areas of EU policy, for example the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (COM (2010) 636, final) and Energy 2020 (COM (2010) 639, final).

Both Europe 2020 and Energy 2020 address environmental issues. Europe 2020 focuses on greening the economy, although one of its five main targets is directly related to environmental concerns:

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels... increase the share of renewable energy sources in our final energy consumption to 20%; and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.11)

Europe 2020 states that this target should not be viewed in isolation from the other targets. Suggestions for achieving it include economic signals to consumers, new technologies and '[decoupling] growth from energy use' (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.15). Key proposals include: decarbonising public and private transport (via new technologies and infrastructures); upgrading European energy networks and developing a 'supergrid' (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.16); supporting businesses and consumers to increase resource efficiency and alter their consumption; and creating an achievable target for environmental change over the next 40 years. Additionally, it mandates member states to get rid of subsidies which lead to environmental damage, and to make their own investments and improvements in areas such as transport, energy and procurement. Europe 2020 also discusses the potential for promoting further regulation regarding environmental issues globally and for member states to raise environmental and energy taxes rather than those on labour. Guidance for delivering the strategy was also produced in the form of a handbook, aimed at local and regional authorities, and distributed across the EU (Committee of the Regions (CoR), 2014).

Energy 2020 focuses on the European energy supply in the context of sustainable, affordable energy 'for all consumers... while contributing to the EU's wider social and climate goals' (COM (2010) 639, final, p.2). Regarding environmental issues, it notes that 45% of electricity generated in Europe is from low-carbon sources. Much of the EU's energy stock will need replacing

within the decade, necessitating the development of further renewable energy generation capacity. Additionally, it highlights the impact of national energy policies on other member states and the need for integrated energy policy between nations if an adequate solution is to be reached.

Like Europe 2020, Energy 2020 targets transport and procurement as areas for action, as well as 'empowering consumers' (COM (2010) 639, final, p.5) through enforcing competition policy amongst domestic energy suppliers and educating consumers about their rights. Other suggestions include environmental taxes, a European supergrid, and increasing energy efficiency through altering consumption patterns. Both documents note that if other developed countries also commit to the same, the European target for greenhouse gas emissions reduction this decade would increase from 20% to 30%. Energy 2020 also discusses the potential of construction and existing building stock as areas for environmental gains. It suggests the need for investment from the EU and member states, as well as streamlining the legislative and administrative procedures required to achieve these goals. Finally, it links energy to development – for example in attempts to eradicate extreme poverty – and the issue of access to energy.

The EU also has a 'Sustainable Development Strategy', most recently 'renewed' in 2006 and reviewed in 2009 (COM (2009) 400, final; European Council, 2006). This strategy has existed alongside first the Lisbon Strategy and now EU2020, although with different provenance and governance arrangements (Steurer and Berger, 2011). Based on European Council Objectives, the 2006 Sustainable Development Strategy sets various targets and required actions for reductions in emissions, energy consumption, and health inequalities; the restructuring of transport; increased sustainable consumption, social inclusion (via increased employment); and aid to developing nations. This was written before the economic crises of subsequent years, however, and the 2009 review emphasised the need to mainstream sustainability in a context of promoting economic recovery, addressing unemployment rises and reforming the financial system.

Other relevant overarching strategies come under the purview of the European Commission directorates-general for environment and climate action – for example climate change and environmental policies and strategies, including

roadmaps to 80% reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions (COM (2011) 112, final) and sustainable energy systems (COM (2011) 885, final). A White Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change discusses how to improve resilience in various sectors (COM (2009) 147, final). Additionally, a Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan (COM (2008) 397, final) addresses implications for citizen-consumers as well as larger bodies. Transport as a specific issue (with implications for emissions reduction, energy consumption and health) is addressed in a number of EU documents, and has its own directorate-general (Mobility and Transport). The most recent document found was a White Paper on the future of transport in and around Europe (COM (2011) 144, final). This addresses technical changes as well as influencing citizen behaviour to switch to more sustainable transport modes and better information about more sustainable travel.

Finally, two Directives commit the UK to various targets and link in to the strategies described above. The Renewable Energy Directive (Council Directive 2009/28/EC) commits the UK to achieving a target of a 15% proportion of renewable energy in the overall energy mix consumed by 2020. The Directive for energy efficiency (Council Directive 2012/27/EU) commits the EU as a whole to a 20% reduction in energy consumption through efficiency and requires member states to set national targets accordingly. It specifies various measures that should be taken with the goal of improving energy efficiency, for example in residential buildings and by energy utility companies.

2.2.3 UK

In the UK, the Climate Change Act (2008) legislated for an 80% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2050. Two UK Government departments are central to this task: the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The DECC's Carbon Plan (2011), produced in accordance with Climate Change Act 2008 provisions, provides a roadmap for achieving decarbonisation in line with emissions reduction targets. It addresses key sectors of the UK economy (buildings, transport, industry, electricity generation and agriculture and land use) with various targets through to the 2020s. In addition, an Energy Efficiency Strategy

(DECC, 2012) considers efficiency measures across government, business and individual consumers.

DECC are also responsible for the Renewable Heat Incentive, Green Deal and the now-closed Warm Front Scheme. These initiatives enable householders to make their homes more energy efficient by providing grants or loans and incentivising micro-generation of renewable energy. Warm Front was specifically aimed at reducing fuel poverty by providing grants to people in receipt of specific benefits who had poorly insulated private or private-rented homes (Watson and Bolton, 2013). Finally, DECC are responsible for the Energy Act (2013), which is predominantly focused on government and business responsibilities including tackling fuel poverty, regulating domestic energy tariffs and relatedly keeping household energy bills as low as possible. The previous Energy Act (2011) brought in the Green Deal and the related Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) which is funded by energy companies and focuses on reducing fuel poverty and improving the current housing stock.

Meanwhile, DEFRA focus on sustainable development objectives and issues such as waste, sustainable consumption, the natural environment and biodiversity. DEFRA are responsible for the Coalition government's 'vision' for Mainstreaming Sustainable Development in the UK (2011b) which included various broad aims and objectives for sustainable development across government. DEFRA also produced the Waste Strategy (2007 and 2013a), for considering waste reduction – and associated issues such as recycling – across government, business and households. Additionally, they produced a Sustainable Consumption report (2013b) which focused on food concerns, although this was a summary of research and planning for future policy rather than policy itself. DEFRA also delivered the (2011a) Natural Environment White Paper which considered the value of the natural environment and its relationship with the population and economy.

DEFRA have funded various programmes of research into household and individual energy and resource use to inform their policymaking. Their Behaviours Unit commissioned research into pro-environmental behaviours between 2005 and 2008 which led them to set up a 'Sustainable Behaviours Unit' in 2006 (Eppel et al., 2013). This has funded recent research into Sustainable Lifestyles and Sustainable Practices (DEFRA, 2011c). In a draft

discussion paper from 2010, a number of DEFRA economists and social researchers described the existing knowledge around behaviour change that had been developed from this research and how this might influence DEFRA's approach to policymaking (Collier et al., 2010). It highlighted the '4E' model – which has been used by DEFRA since 2005 – as a useful way to approach to behaviour change in policy. The 4 'E's – encouraging, enabling, engaging and exemplifying – highlight different relevant factors, for example how to target and motivate individuals but also remove barriers to action (see Collier, 2010, p.7 for an overview). A Sustainable Lifestyles Framework (DEFRA, 2011d) was also published as a result of this research, which describes the kinds of behaviours and meanings that individuals might demonstrate as aspects of sustainable lifestyles (this can be viewed in Appendix A). The majority of behaviours outlined in this framework also appear in the Natural Environment White Paper (DEFRA, 2011a).

The Department for Transport (DfT) is another key player in UK policy, given that a significant proportion of the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from domestic transport. The Sustainable Local Transport strategy (DfT 2011a) addresses individuals' transport options and ways to encourage individuals away from private cars. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are also relevant because of the emissions implicated in heating and powering people's homes, as well as planning concerns. They produced the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012), which provides guidance to local councils for creating their own local development frameworks. This document mentions that disabled people need to be taken into account with regard to transport, the general housing mix, and affordable housing. The Cabinet Office (2010) produced a statement on the 'Big Society' idea, which also has relevance for demonstrating the general approach to citizen involvement envisioned by the Coalition. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have a Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2010). It highlights potential risks to 'vulnerable' groups such as disabled people and discusses actions that need to be taken to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. Currently these actions are mostly around improving the evidence base for future needs and coordinating with other departments. Finally, two documents – a report called 'Shaping our future' (HM Government, 2010a)

produced jointly by a number of departments (DEFRA, DECC, DCLG and others, as well as 'civil society groups') and its implantation plan (DEFRA, 2012) – discuss how civil society might respond to the challenge of issues such as climate change.

2.3 Policies addressing disability equality

2.3.1 Global

The key document at the global level promoting disability equality is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which came into force in 2008 (UN Enable, 2014). The UNCRPD is legally binding on the 124 member states that have signed and ratified or acceded to the Convention, and a further 30 have signed the Convention indicating an intention to ratify in the future (UN et al., 2007). Existing human rights treaties have not managed to address the problems disabled people face, so the UNCRPD – instead of creating any 'new' human rights – situates those existing rights in terms of how they should apply to disabled people (Kett et al., 2009). Article 1 states that it sets out to 'promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity'. Both the EU as an Intergovernmental Organisation (since 2011) and the UK as a member state (since 2009) are signatories.

The UNCRPD also briefly mentions sustainable development in the preamble section (g): '*Emphasizing* the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development'. This has perhaps begun to be addressed with the mentions of disability in the Rio+20 outcome document (UN, 2012b). This reaffirms the place of disabled people in terms of human rights as well as acknowledging the need for involvement of disabled people at every level of governance. New 'green' economic policies and sustainable development should 'enhance the welfare of... person with disabilities' (Article 58) and the need for accessible environments (Article 135) and education (Article 229) are also highlighted. Disability was also referenced

in Agenda 21 twenty years previously – for example with regard to participation in decision-making processes. Both, however, are non-binding agreements.

2.3.2 EU

As well as ratifying the UNCRPD, disability issues are addressed in a number of areas and strategies across EU policy. There are two relevant directorates-general: Justice, and Mobility and Transport. The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, part of EU2020, is under the purview of the Justice directorate-general. Disability is also mentioned twice in the Europe 2020 strategy document; on both occasions relating to aims of tackling poverty and social exclusion. The action against social exclusion includes fighting discrimination and addressing measures at particularly disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, as well as improving education and employment opportunities and '[making] work pay' (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.19) by monitoring tax and benefit levels. The Sustainable Development Strategy (European Council, 2006) mentions disability explicitly only with regard to improving employment rates and providing equal opportunities to children. Energy 2020 is probably also making reference to disability when it discusses 'vulnerable consumers' and 'people in social need' in the context of rising energy prices. The White Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change notes that disabled people as a group may be more affected by climate change effects (COM (2009) 147, final). The White Paper on the future of transport in and around Europe (COM (2011) 144, final) also briefly makes note of the particular access requirements for disabled people in the context of improving the quality of transport and infrastructure.

The main strategic discussion of disability equality is, however, contained in the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (COM (2010) 636, final). The strategy highlights the need for disabled people to be fully integrated in society as a condition of success for the overall EU2020 strategy, although this is not explicitly specified as a target in the Europe 2020 document. It sets out a financial rationale for accessible products and services, especially with a growing elderly population amongst whom disability rates are not decreasing. The strategy aspires to empower disabled people and facilitate a full enjoyment of the rights and benefits of full participation in both the economy and society. Removing barriers is a key aim across eight areas:

- Accessibility

- Participation
- Equality
- Employment
- Education and training
- Social protection
- Health
- External action.

These are operationalised into targets such as achieving full citizenship through equal access to voting and EU documentation; promoting awareness-raising campaigns to decrease discrimination; getting more disabled people into formal, paid work; increasing the quality of and access to education and training; or sustaining adequate systems of welfare. Key to achieving these is awareness-raising and accessible information for disabled people, as well as raising awareness nationally about the situation of disabled people and the potential for inclusion. Access to research funding for disabled people is also mentioned, as is progress monitoring towards these goals. Other than the Disability Strategy, the Green Paper 'Towards a new culture for urban mobility' (COM (2007) 551, final) from the Mobility and Transport DG discusses the issue of accessible transport for disabled and older people. It highlights the need for joined up, reliable and accessible collective transport networks and infrastructure to encourage people to use these as an alternative to private vehicles.

2.3.3 UK

In the UK, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has responsibility for the legislation which aims to tackle discrimination against disabled people – such as the Equality Act (2010) and its accompanying strategy – and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This is a requirement for public organisations to consider the needs of protected groups in their policies and services. The Equality Act replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and (2005) – the previous legislation against disability discrimination. The Office for Disability Issues (ODI), a branch of the DWP, has responsibility for coordinating policies relating to disability in all aspects of government. They are also responsible for the Equality 2025 agenda (ODI, 2009) – a 'roadmap' and

advisory group of disabled people aiming to achieve disability equality by 2025. This advisory group has since been disbanded and replaced by a 'Fulfilling Potential Forum' run by the DWP and chaired by the Minister for Disabled People with members representing various disability organisations (DWP, 2014). This mentions various areas of life in which disabled people are currently disadvantaged (but not environmental issues). Built environments are discussed implicitly in relation to accessible housing, transport and other facilities, although it may be assumed that physical access is a requirement for education and employment also.

The ODI also recently published a report on disabled people's lives in the UK today (DWP, 2013) and the DWP produced a 'next steps' document (2012) to lay out actions and strategies to further disabled people's involvement and inclusion in society. These documents mentioned environmental issues in terms of the built environment, and the 2012 document also mentioned access to natural environments. The National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012) additionally mentions that disabled people need to be taken into account with regard to transport, the general housing mix, and affordable housing.

The ongoing welfare reforms set in motion by the Coalition Government with the Welfare Reform Act (2012) are also relevant to many disabled people, which sets out eligibility for and conditions of various sickness and disability benefits claimed by a significant proportion of disabled people in the UK. For those who require additional support in terms of social care, the Health and Social Care Act (2012) covers issues such as integration of health and social care services, and the Care Act (2014) sets out eligibility criteria and duties for providing social care.

2.4 Exploring policy: relevant issues for this thesis

Having briefly considered a range of policies addressing issues of sustainability and disability at global, EU and national levels, the chapter now turns to a consideration of key themes relevant to both topics. The multi-level approach

allows a broader view across different scales of governance. First, how disability equality and sustainability are conceptualised and understood in different policies will be considered. Second, the wider paradigm encompassing the context in which the various policies were written is discussed and issues surrounding the implementation of various policies are explored. The final discussion then considers the role of citizens as set out in the policies. It will introduce to the thesis ideas of individual responsibility and its relation to disability equality and sustainability as understood in policy. Various implications for disability equality and sustainability in all these areas will be drawn out where relevant. The chapter will then conclude with a consideration of the 'environmental citizen' implicit in these documents and its relevance and appropriateness for disabled individuals.

2.4.1 Understandings of sustainability

While the Brundtland definition of sustainable development – 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p.43) – is widely cited, concrete aims such as those in the Kyoto Protocol seem to fall short of it. In particular, the Kyoto protocol specifically states a position that economic development is a key consideration even when tackling GHG emissions, seemingly placing economic concerns above environmental ones. The EU's Sustainable Development Strategy also starts from the Brundtland definition and builds on this, stating that:

It is about safeguarding the earth's capacity to support life in all its diversity and is based on the principles of democracy, gender equality, solidarity, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights, including freedom and equal opportunities for all. It aims at the continuous improvement of the quality of life and well-being on Earth for present and future generations. To that end it promotes a dynamic economy with full employment and a high level of education, health protection, social and territorial cohesion and environmental protection in a peaceful and secure world, respecting cultural diversity. (European Council, 2006, p.2)

This definition also seems to prioritise the economy. This also supports Begg's suggestion that the definition of sustainable development understood by the EU is built around three goals of 'competitiveness, social cohesion and growth'

(Begg, 2009, p.152) – which reflects the three headline priorities of EU2020 and those of the preceding Lisbon strategy.

Europe 2020 and Energy 2020 both seem to hold a weak approach to sustainability, according to the definitions in Chapter One. Although the link between growth and environmental improvement is recognised to be somewhat problematic, both documents assume the possibility of 'decoupl[ing]... economic growth from resource and energy use' (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.16). They suggest that this may be achieved through increased resource efficiency and a transfer to low carbon or renewable energy sources. Decoupling, however, is a contested concept with limited evidence of success (see for example Jackson, 2011). Additionally, due to a lack of investment in and progress with the transfer to renewable energy, Energy 2020 mentions the potential for exploiting unconventional or shale gas (requiring a process commonly known as fracking). This is despite widespread concern and current lack of knowledge about its potential environmental impact (Stevens, 2010), and regardless of significant evidence that keeping GHGs at safe levels involves a radical reduction in our use of even already-known fossil fuel reserves (IPCC, 2013). This implies a higher level of concern for economic growth than for environmental protection, and also fits with the Europe 2020 aims that place competition before sustainability. Energy 2020, however, does discuss the need for increased access to energy internationally to fight poverty, whilst suggesting that to integrate this aim with others in the 2020 strategy 'sustainable development needs to be at the core of both energy and development policy' (COM (2010) 639, final, p.17). This is the only direct mention of 'sustainable development' itself in EU2020.

The UK approach is similar to that of the EU, implying the prioritisation of the economy over the environment. In DEFRA's sustainability strategy, sustainable development is defined as:

Making the necessary decisions now to realise our vision of stimulating economic growth and tackling the deficit, maximising wellbeing and protecting our environment, without negatively impacting on the ability of future generations to do the same.
(DEFRA, 2011b, p.2)

Further on it also mentions issues such as improving quality of life as well as standards of living. However, this definition explicitly foregrounds economic

growth and, as with other policy definitions, indicates a weak sustainability approach.

2.4.2 Understandings of disability and disability equality

The UNCRPD acknowledges a social model of disability: 'disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (UNCRPD preamble part (e)). This appears to emphasise what Thomas (1999) described as the 'property' approach (in Chapter One section 1.1.1) rather than the social relational element. In terms of disability equality, the UNCRPD adopts a multidimensional approach (Fredman, 2011).

The EU's Disability Strategy quotes the UNCRPD definition of disability. Terms used within the strategy also imply a social model approach – such as removal of barriers, fighting discrimination and inclusion and participation. Regarding disability equality, the strategy uses 'equality' as one of its eight aims, specifically focusing on combating discrimination. Participation 'on an equal basis with others' and equal access and treatment are discussed throughout, however, and imply a multi-dimensional concept of equality as discussed in Chapter One (section 1.1.2), although lacking attention to the 'transformation' dimension.

The UK also uses social model language in many of its disability-focused documents, and the Fulfilling Potential Next Steps document explicitly references the social model (DWP, 2012). UK disability legislation, however – most recently in the Equality Act (2010) – is still predicated on an individual understanding of disability. Chapter 1 Section 6 (1) states:

- A person (P) has a disability if—
- (a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and
 - (b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Additionally, this latter definition is referenced in some policy documents, such as the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012). Similarly, terminology associated with an individual understanding of disability – such as the use of 'people with disabilities' rather than 'disabled people' – is identifiable

in documents such as the Natural Environment White Paper (DEFRA, 2011a). ODI's (2009) Equality 2025 agenda is only a partial view of equality compared to the multidimensional concept. It touches on redistribution and participation dimensions, but does not fully address recognition or transformation:

'...equal access to education and play... to find work, have interesting careers and access to training... to have equality in their everyday lives... to enjoy their social lives... and serve the community...' (ODI, 2009, p.3)

That the transformation dimension of equality is missing from both EU and UK understandings of disability equality hints strongly that the equality aimed for here is bounded by existing social arrangements. This has implications for the solutions offered by EU and UK policies, which will be demonstrated as the chapter progresses.

At every level, full participation of disabled people in society is highlighted as a key issue in disability-focused documents, but assumptions around what this entails and how it can be achieved vary. The UNCRPD sets out basic principles, describing in broad strokes what full participation might entail across various areas of life without explicitly prioritising any one aspect. In contrast, both the EU Disability Strategy and various UK policies (such as the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act and the focus of the Fulfilling Potential report) prioritise formal, paid employment as the main method to promote disability equality, fight discrimination and improve inclusion and participation. Dealing specifically with employment, the measures noted in the EU Disability Strategy are mostly 'supply-side' – focused on the potential workers rather than potential job creators – although there is some acknowledgement of issues such as creating accessible workplaces and voluntary diversity initiatives for employers, reflecting a social model approach. Supply-side measures aim to 'activate' disabled workers to seek employment and include increasing individuals' levels of education and skills, and addressing 'disability benefit cultures' (COM (2010) 636, final, p.7) that create disincentives to work. Europe 2020 also contains some measures for promoting job creation via investment in research and development and green technologies.

As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.1.1) exclusion from employment was identified as a central cause of disabled people's exclusion by UPIAS back in 1975, and also problematised to consider what is, or should be, considered as

'work' (Barnes, 2000, 2003a). A materialist understanding of disability also explains how the current economic system is inherently disabling. According to these arguments, until maximising growth, profit and efficiency are challenged as the main targets, full disability equality will not be achieved, although this is not an argument acknowledged by EU and UK strategies. The assumption across these policies, however – that employment is the route to social inclusion – is also contested for groups other than disabled people (van Berkel et al., 2002). For example, part-time or 'irregular' work, on the rise in the UK context, has been shown to have limited effectiveness with regard to inclusion (Garcia and de Schampheire, 2002). This work is also often less secure than full-time employment, and may impact negatively on health (Waddel and Burton, 2006). Another concern regarding the focus on employment is that it creates the potential for exclusion of those who cannot find employment, or are unable to work due to their level of impairment (Abberley, 2002).

Even where strategies to increase disabled people's employment are focused on barriers rather than perceived individual deficiencies, they do not acknowledge the rising levels of unemployment currently being experienced by both disabled and non-disabled workers. In addition, the growth in employment that was anticipated by Europe 2020 is at least partly focused on those created by investment in renewables – so-called 'green jobs'. These often require specific skill sets, however (Strietska-Illina et al., 2011). This may further disadvantage disabled job-seekers because disabled people face greater barriers to education (COM (2010) 636, final) and thus to becoming skilled workers. Tackling 'disability benefit cultures' in this climate may therefore be counter-productive because there are not enough jobs for people who may be 'incentivised' by having benefits reduced or removed.

In the UK, the general trend has also been supply-side policies for increasing disabled people's inclusion in employment (Grover and Piggott, 2013), and the DWP's new work programme for disabled people is firmly supply-side (Rees et al., 2013; Yates and Roulstone, 2013). Similarly, 'disability benefit culture' has been radically targeted by the Coalition government's welfare reforms which in many ways represent a continuation and extension of New Labour's aims up to 2010 (Patrick, 2012). Ongoing tightening of the qualifications for disability benefits through the Welfare Reform Act (2012) has the potential for negative

impacts on disabled people; if individuals are not recognised as disabled they may not receive the correct support and advice regarding benefits and work. Research conducted by disability activists suggests that this is increasingly the case (Spartacus Network, 2014). Other reforms have also, for example, increased conditionality around work-related activity and reduced housing benefit. These are contributing to increasing the vulnerability faced by many disabled people who rely on welfare (Wood, 2012), although there is no evidence that these kinds of policies lead to improved national disability employment rates (MacInnes et al., 2014). The increasing vulnerability faced by many, however, seems contradictory both to the aims of the UNCRPD but also to those of UK's definition of sustainable development, discussed in the previous section.

The focus on paid employment as a way to promote disability equality seems to indicate the centrality of economic considerations for both EU and UK policy. Also, the focus on individual deficiencies – i.e. supply-side measures – and implied malingering (or ‘disability benefit cultures’) present in actually enacted policies may undermine those aims of policy that are predicated on a social model understanding of disability. Individual understandings of disability – particularly in the UK – may therefore be increasing the problems already faced by disabled people (Spartacus Network, 2014). There is also a clear overlap between the approach to disability equality just outlined in EU and UK policies, and the approach to sustainability: both have a central focus on economic considerations. As noted in the previous chapter, however, the economy is only one of three ‘pillars’ vital to sustainability. Therefore it is worth considering the impacts of the wider paradigms these policies are being written within.

2.4.3 Wider paradigms

Both the EU and UK policies can be identified, from the discussion so far, as operating firmly within a neo-liberal paradigm. The central priority for EU2020 is the economy, and its organising theme is the emphasis on continued economic growth. This reflects the neo-liberal consensus that currently dominates the developed world (Cerny 2008). This is explicitly laid out in the headline priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy: ‘smart growth... sustainable growth... inclusive growth’ (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.5). The strategy’s key mechanisms for

promoting this growth include: getting more individuals into paid employment; extending educational opportunities and achievements; investing in R&D; and meeting climate targets through increased energy efficiency.

The focus on growth runs across EU policy, and economic-focused solutions may also be seen in the Disability Strategy. As noted above, the main method it suggests to fight discrimination and improve inclusion and participation is through getting more disabled people into formal, paid employment – and therefore contributing to the economy and growth. This is echoed in the Europe 2020 strategy document as the solution to inclusion more generally. There are some exceptions, however, for example Energy 2020 notes that a number of its aims cannot be left to the market to solve.

Similarly, the UK – with the weak sustainability implied in its vision for Sustainable Development, its prioritisation of the economy, and resolutely supply-side employment interventions – reflects a neoliberal political paradigm (Rees et al., 2013; Yates and Roulstone, 2013). This research was initially proposed while the previous New Labour government was still in power, and has therefore run alongside the changes that have been brought about during the past four years of Coalition Government. It is therefore possible to see the continuation of a neoliberal agenda, for example in the case of individual citizen action, as will be explored further on in this chapter. It is also notable that, according to recent media reports, the current Prime Minister, David Cameron, told staff to 'get rid of all the green crap' in a conversation about reducing the costs of UK energy bills (Schofield, 2013). This does not suggest a positive view of sustainability from government. However, it is also logical that within a weak sustainability approach, because of its emphasis on technology and substitutability, active environmental protection might be viewed as simply another cost rather than as a positive feature of policy.

A neoliberal economic paradigm is likely to be associated with an environmentally modernist, weak sustainability approach, as discussed in the previous chapter. This is arguably what is also seen here in the sustainability policies of both the UK and EU. It again seems logical that this would be the case – those in positions of influence regarding the policy process are likely to promote those strategies that help them preserve the status quo in their favour (Leach et al., 2010). Similarly, although UN declarations are less concerned

with economic considerations, agreements such as Kyoto indicates that even they are not immune from neoliberalising influences. There are also difficulties translating UN policies into action, as will now be discussed.

2.4.4 Implementation

Regardless of policy makers' intentions and policy aims, their implementation 'on the ground' can often have unintended or unanticipated effects (Leach et al., 2010). Achieving implementation of any kind can also be fraught with difficulty. The 'global' policies and declarations of the UN are a set of overarching guidelines or parameters within which EU and UK policymakers are intended to work. This is dependent, however upon the relative enforcement powers of the different declarations and strategies, and compliance at the national level can be problematic. The difficulties of supranational governance are exemplified by the Kyoto protocol. As Baker (2006) has noted, despite being a binding agreement, there seems no way to enforce compliance, reflected by the USA's ability to withdraw from the treaty and the lack of agreement (to date) about a realistic proposition for further action beyond the original agreement. Some of this comes from the need for flexibility at the national level because of the large differences between countries' emissions records and capacities for mitigation (Albrecht and Arts, 2005; von Stein, 2008). The Kyoto protocol has also been criticised for the relative weakness of its targets (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, 2005).

From a sustainability viewpoint, Kyoto seems to have been largely ineffective – while reductions in GHG emissions have been achieved in many countries bound by the protocol, those who were not subject to emissions reduction targets have increased emissions, meaning global increases have continued (Olivier et al., 2012). Part of the problem may have been the focus of the original UNFCCC, concentrating on mitigating effects rather than looking more imaginatively at adaptation to climate change (Swart and Raes, 2007). Additionally, in the UK, around 25% of emissions reduction to 2004 was simply due to a switch from coal to natural gas in the energy supply (Maslin et al., 2007), indicating a weak form of sustainability. This demonstrates another problem with the Kyoto Protocol's narrowly defined targets. Although achieving emissions reduction, it ignored (or allowed to be ignored) another key aspect of

sustainability: the proper management of finite fossil fuel resources, for which there is currently no binding agreement at the UN level. In terms of meeting the generally agreed limit of a global warming increase of less than two degrees Celsius, in the current policy context this is now unlikely to be achieved (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2012), and any significant climate change mitigation agreement post-2015 will be challenging to negotiate (Briner and Prag, 2013).

With regard to disability-focused policy, it has already been noted that the UNCRPD is binding on those who have ratified it. Progress towards implementation in the UK, however, has not yet been reviewed by the UNCRPD Committee. As a signatory the UK has so far produced one report on its progress (ODI, 2011) emphasising moves towards disability equality. This includes mention of the welfare reforms which have since begun to be enacted, despite multiple warnings over human rights implications from the Joint Committee on Human Rights (Human Rights Joint Committee, 2011) and a coalition of charities (Just Fair, 2014). The UK EHRC (2012a) has also been critical of the UK government's decision to express reservations on four articles or subsections of the UNCRPD, such as Article 24 on inclusive education. Additionally, a UN human rights Special Rapporteur on housing recently found that the impacts of government reforms to housing benefit on 'vulnerable' groups, including disabled people, are in contradiction to its commitments to rights to adequate housing (Rolnik, 2013). These and other criticisms of current policies suggest that there may be significant barriers to full implementation of the UNCRPD in the UK. The UN's own judgement of the UK situation is still some time away, but these issues call into question the effectiveness of UN agreements.

Even regarding the Coalition government's own disability-focused policies and strategies, there seem to be contradictory aims and effects. Although ODI suggest that progress towards Equality 2025 is ongoing, many new disabled people's organisations have sprung up since the start of the Coalition government to highlight how current welfare reforms are negatively impacting disabled people. These groups, such as Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC), the Spartacus Network, and Hardest Hit, also aim to coordinate research, media campaigning and protests (Scott, 2014). The Fulfilling Potential report (DWP, 2013) suggests that there has been a decrease in relative poverty since 2004/5

to 2011/12, the latest data available. It attributes this to 'increases in benefit income, as a result of the uprating of benefits by more than earnings growth' (DWP, 2013, p.62). As the Welfare Benefits Uprating Act (2013) has since been passed, limiting increases to benefits to below inflation, as well as welfare reforms – such as the 'spare room subsidy' or 'bedroom tax' and the time-limiting of ESA – coming into effect, it may be expected that the trend of decreasing poverty may be halted or even reversed, contradicting stated Coalition aims.

External circumstances, such as the state of the world economy, can also influence the implementation of policy. A particular issue for EU policy is the contrast of its emphasis on economic growth with the reality of the current economic situation in Europe. GDP growth has not stabilised since the start of the economic crisis in 2008 (Eurostat, 2014) and IMF forecasts have only recently become more positive (IMF, 2014). Economic crises often overshadow less immediate or visible threats such as those from climate change (Ford, 2009). This can lead to the side-lining of environmental goals in pursuit of solutions for the economy. There is some evidence for this in terms of the inclusion of shale gas as a potential energy option in the Energy 2020 document, discussed previously. It is also important to note, however, that there has been continued progress towards the EU's environmental goals – for example being on track with GHG emissions reductions among other aims (European Union, 2013).

Nevertheless, household consumption in terms of electricity has been consistently rising. Additionally, numbers in poverty or at risk of poverty have been increasing since the start of the economic crisis while health gains have slowed. Overall, there is 'a rather mixed picture' (European Union, 2013, p.8) with regard to sustainable development. Some of the progress towards environmental goals may have only occurred *because* of the economic situation; due to 'low economic performance' as opposed to 'a thorough transformation of the EU energy sector' (European Union, 2013, p.179). Similarly, the most recent report on Europe 2020 suggested that it is 'not delivering on its promises' (CoR, 2013, p.9) because of issues relating to limited funding, ineffectiveness of governance and lack of recognition of different national situations.

From the analysis so far, there appear to be a number of synergies between disability equality and sustainability in policy. Both are addressed, in UK and EU policies, from a neoliberal perspective that prioritises the economy and therefore is limited in scope. While this is less the case for UN declarations and agreements, they face significant problems regarding implementation, as do even limited EU and UK attempts to promote both aims. Similarly, the stated aims of policies and their actual effects often differ. The final section of this chapter considers the roles for citizens described in the various policies. These indicate underlying assumptions about the valued characteristics of citizens and who may qualify for citizenship in particular contexts. This is important for this thesis because an overly individualised perspective can miss broader social factors that have relevance for participation in environmental activities, and an overly universalised perspective can miss differences between individuals which are relevant to avoid unhelpful generalisations.

2.5 Citizen participation

The UN enshrines citizen participation and public awareness as central to achieving both disability equality and sustainability. The Aarhus Convention considers general citizen participation in environmental decision making; the original Rio Declaration mentions the role of citizens in Principle 10: 'Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level'. In this way it parallels the UNCRPD's highlighting of participation as a significant issue for disabled people at all levels and the need for disability equality to be mainstreamed in policies addressing sustainable development. This has only begun to occur in the past decade, however, and it has been widely noted that disability was absent from the MDGs, targets and indicators (UN, 2011; Thomas, 2004b). Despite some progress, barriers to participation in sustainability-focused policy areas remain. For example, Wolbring and colleagues (2013) examined disability issues in relation to the post-2015 agenda. They highlight a number of key concerns including a lack of visibility of disabled people in much of the sustainable development discourse. This was due to poor attitudes from non-disabled

others, as well as barriers to education, meaning some disabled people were unable to act effectively as self-advocates. Poor attitudes were linked to ‘the prevailing medical model of disability’ in de-developed nations (Wolbring et al., 2013, p.4163) which emphasised solutions of care rather than independence and inclusion.

That disability equality is not seen as an aim relevant to all sustainability sectors in development contexts is concerning. A lack of political will rather than a lack of knowledge is also a feature of ongoing difficulties. Building capacity among disabled people to advocate on different issues is highlighted as a central factor in starting to address disability issues (Wolbring et al., 2013). Therefore, while it is positive to see the Rio+20 outcome document referencing disability issues and recognising the need to include disabled people in planning as well as outcomes, its ability to translate this into the post-2015 agenda and goals going forward is uncertain. Similarly, although disability was referenced in Agenda 21 – for example with regard to participation in decision-making processes – this inclusion may have been more ‘tick-box’ than meaningful (Charles and Thomas, 2007). More generally, although policies at the global level tend not to reach down to the level of individual responsibilities, it is interesting to note that these are mentioned in general terms in the preamble part (w) of the UNCRPD:

the individual, having duties to other individuals and to the community to which he or she belongs, is under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the International Bill of Human Rights.

Across the EU documents examined, the emphasis was largely on citizens’ rights rather than individual responsibilities. For example, the Europe 2020 strategy document uses terms like empowerment and ‘ownership’ (COM (2010) 2020, final). Energy 2020 highlights the savings to citizens (in terms of household bills) through energy efficiency and notes that policy is responsible for protecting citizens from various risks and enabling them to benefit from policy achievements envisaged (COM (2010) 639, final). The Disability Strategy noted that disabled people are often prevented from ‘fully exercising ...their Union citizenship rights’ (COM (2010) 636, final, p.5) and that this needs to be rectified.

Citizen action, however, was less mentioned. Europe 2020 avoided imposing specific responsibilities by suggesting that member states need to decide and

publicise their own citizen responsibilities. Individuals and groups at all levels – from parliaments to citizens – should ‘help implement the strategy... taking action in areas within their responsibility’ (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.30). The Sustainable Development Strategy, along with other documents, highlighted issues of education and raising awareness. These were implicitly linked to citizen roles as a key prerequisite of action or of citizens making ‘better choices’ (COM (2008) 397, final, p.3) in terms of environmental impact. References to awareness raising and education may also imply that this is all individuals need to change their personal actions with regard to environmental issues – and presumably that this unspecified individual change *will* occur. Other than this, there are few active roles assigned to citizens, which may be positive as it means responsibility is not over-individualised.

It is also interesting to note the effect of the interlinking targets within Europe 2020. It acknowledged that one cannot succeed without the others also being met. This has been highlighted in relation to the full inclusion and participation of disabled people in meeting the Europe 2020 targets, including environmental targets. This means that disabled people ‘count’ amongst targets aimed at EU citizens – being affected by environmental taxes for example, as well as being ‘empowered’ along with other citizens to alter energy and consumption behaviour and learn about rights regarding domestic energy. The aims to increase energy production and ‘green’ products may stimulate job creation which potentially complements goals to increase employment levels amongst disabled people. Both Energy 2020 and the Disability Strategy also describe actions to reduce levels of impairment, such as specific safety standards in various areas.

Somewhat contradictorily to aims of full participation and inclusion, however, disabled people who fall into groupings of ‘vulnerable’ or having ‘particular social needs’ may be exempted from some requirements. Europe 2020’s target regarding environmentally harmful subsidies aims: ‘to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies, *limiting exceptions to people with social needs*’ (COM (2010) 2020, final, p.16, emphasis mine). Giving exceptions in this manner, however, may serve to highlight difference and promote exclusion. This also represents a potential tension between social and environmental approaches to sustainability in policy. Foley and colleagues note that

'sometimes policies which would be most effective in protecting the environment are those which could have unacceptably regressive impacts' (Foley et al., 2005, p.178). By limiting these social impacts through exceptions, this policy is potentially also limiting its positive environmental impacts (because some people are excepted and presumably left to continue potentially damaging environmental activities, rather than being properly supported into more sustainable lifestyles like the rest of the population). This runs counter to ideas of fully addressing social aspects of sustainability as well as environmental sustainability, as discussed in Chapter One.

Similarly, disabled people in UK sustainability-focused policies are often mentioned only in relation to 'vulnerability' and protection from various environmental 'bads' such as fuel poverty. For example, despite some more positive mentions of disability in DfT's (2011a) low carbon transport strategy, disabled people are still considered 'vulnerable' group: 'community transport provides much valued essential services, often for the most vulnerable in our society, whether these are... those with disabilities...' (DfT, 2011a, p.81). These representations of disabled people mean potential for agency is often not addressed – as discussed in Chapter One. Abbott and Porter (2013) also note that in planning and policy documents around responses to environmental hazards (such as climate change-related disasters) disabled people are routinely categorised as 'vulnerable.' This contrasts with the representation of disabled people in disability-focused policies, discussed previously, in terms of taking active roles, for example in preparing for and seeking paid employment.

In the UK, despite some positive effects around developing citizen participation from the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the previous decade (Agyeman and Evans, 2004), sustainable policy discourses situate citizens primarily as consumers (Barr et al., 2011a). Again, this provides a good fit within the overarching neoliberal political paradigm that emphasises rational individualism over other forms of engagement. The Coalition government has continued this trend from New Labour, as can be seen in DECC's energy policies. The 2007 Energy White Paper describes how individuals:

can play their part in reducing the waste of energy, by investing in energy efficiency measures for the home and workplace and by choosing to purchase more energy efficient buildings and products. (DECC, 2007, p.50)

Similarly, the 2012 Energy Efficiency Strategy suggests that individuals can contribute to reducing energy usage and reaching sustainability goals:

through taking action to reduce their demand, such as turning off energy using products that are not in use, buying products that are more efficient or installing energy efficiency measures in their homes. (DECC, 2012, p.5).

It is immediately obvious that these policies place more responsibility on individuals than those from the EU, seen earlier, although it is also possible that this is the result of increased detail as we move to the national level. There are differences in emphasis regarding individuals' roles within UK policies between the previous and current administrations, however, which can be seen in their respective Carbon Plans. New Labour's 2009 Low Carbon Transition Plan (preceding the 2011 Carbon Plan) describes how 'everyone has a role to play in tackling climate change' (DECC, 2009, p.2) and describes various planned incentives for individuals to make their homes more energy efficient and to 'make low carbon travel decisions' (DECC, 2009, p.137). Those considered 'vulnerable' are described in terms of needing protection, but it is also acknowledged that 'some households need more energy to keep warm'. Measures to tackle fuel poverty extend to raising incomes – through 'employment measures' and 'increasing support' for those on low-income benefits (DECC, 2009, pp.100-101). Also mentioned are free bus passes for older and disabled people as one of the investments in low carbon travel.

By contrast, the Coalition government's 2011 Carbon Plan focuses more on government action with consumers benefiting in terms of cost-savings. It describes how the UK will '...make the transition to a low carbon economy while maintaining energy security, and minimising costs to consumers, particularly those in poorer households' (DECC, 2011, p.3). The active individual is still present in terms of the provision of smart meters 'to support consumers in managing their energy and expenditure intelligently' (DECC, 2011, p.5), but cost and energy security are described as the motivations and benefits, rather than the environment. 'Lower carbon travel choices' (DECC, 2011, p.55) are still encouraged, and 'vulnerable' individuals will be helped with insulation and energy bills, but there is no mention of income as a factor in fuel poverty. Another significant change is that the 2009 plan contains a short chapter on the benefits of action on climate change – in terms of energy security, economic

opportunities, but also creating a fairer society – but the latter benefit is absent from the 2011 plan.

Disabled people were only briefly mentioned in either document; in relation to fuel poverty, and to concessionary bus travel in the 2009 plan. The responses to fuel poverty mainly focus around improving energy efficiency. Although the 2009 plan suggested raising incomes, this has not been carried over into the 2011 strategy. As George and colleagues (2013) highlight, however, disabled people's extra energy costs are not only related to heating. Other costs include, for example: additional use of household appliances such as washing machines, charging electronic mobility equipment, or relying on the internet for communication.

In DEFRA's (2007) Waste Strategy, waste reduction is described as needing the involvement of the whole community – businesses and households as well as government. Individuals have their role but are facilitated by other stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the individual or household to 'produce less waste, purchase responsibly, separate their waste in to recyclables' (DEFRA, 2007, p.18). These responsibilities, however, are in the context of local authorities providing recycling services and retailers and businesses making sure their products are facilitative of consumers' behaviours. There is also evidence of the '4E' model underlying ideas. The 4E buzzwords, encouraging, enabling, engaging and exemplifying, are used throughout, with the exception of 'exemplifying'. The strategy states that 'the role of central government is to enable each part of society to take responsibility, and show leadership through reducing its own waste' (DEFRA, 2007, p.10).

By contrast the 2013 Waste Strategy's Ministerial Foreword, by a Coalition MP, suggests that 'Government's role must be to get out of people's hair; to set the conditions and guidelines that allow the market, businesses, local authorities and people to make the changes...' (DEFRA, 2013a, p.3). For individuals this means waste prevention again, plus more information being provided about reuse and recycling (although this is a primarily online resource, which assumes household internet access). Other active roles by individuals include making informed purchasing decisions in terms of choosing reusable or longer life items, and participating in activities outside of the home such as using charity shops and community swap schemes. DEFRA's 4Es are evident, although

again 'exemplify' is missing. The emphasis is on market solutions taken up by individuals, as demonstrated by this extract:

The Government's role must be to set the conditions and guidelines that allow the market, businesses, local authorities and people to make the changes that will propel us towards a more circular and sustainable economy... it is a question of everyone playing their part, taking actions to deliver savings and seize the opportunities that exist. (DEFRA, 2013a, p.16)

While the 2007 strategy discussed the market at a number of points, enabling was done by government. By contrast the above extract suggests government stepping back to allow the market and other actors to enable waste reduction. It also echoes the idea mentioned at the start of the document, of government 'getting out of people's hair', and is therefore something of a contrast to the previous New Labour strategy. This is an example of what Imrie describes as 'a realignment of state-citizen relationships that seek to place more self-responsibility on individuals for their actions' (Imrie, 2014, p.24). Another key issue for everyday lives, household waste collecting, is a local authority responsibility and therefore neither document goes into specifics in terms of the population, meaning that at this level there is no mention of individuals to comment on.

With regard to transport strategies from the DfT (as opposed to the more general mention of travel within the Carbon Plans), there are less differences between corresponding policy documents under Labour (DfT, 2009), and the Coalition (DfT, 2011a). Both claim to recognise the need for individuals to make greener transport choices, acknowledging the current convenience of the car for many users and the need to consider the whole journey when looking to improve public transport. While the only mention of disabled people in the 2009 document is with regard to concessionary travel, however, in the 2011 document disabled people's access is specifically referenced: 'transport also needs to be planned with all users, including those with disabilities or reduced mobility, in mind' (DfT, 2011a, p.52). Free bus transport for disabled people, physical accessibility, protection from harassment, disability awareness for staff and travel training schemes were also described.

A few final documents deserve mention; for example the 'Shaping our future' report (HM Government, 2010a). This suggested that while government's role was to send financial signals to individuals, the third sector's role was to

generate public support for government action on environmental issues. The DWP's Climate Change Adaptation Plan was also targeted at action from government departments rather than citizens. By contrast, DEFRA's Sustainable Lifestyles Framework is referenced in the Natural Environment White Paper (DEFRA, 2011a), giving citizens a variety of responsibilities across various areas of their lives (such as saving energy or travelling sustainably). Disabled people are also mentioned on a few occasions in this document for example regarding the need to improve access to green spaces. Both this and the Big Society statement (Cabinet Office, 2010) emphasise individual responsibility explicitly, in contrast to some of the other documents mentioned here. The Big Society statement also makes use of a common Coalition catchphrase – 'we are all in this together' – to highlight the joint responsibility it envisages of government and individuals. Although the rhetoric is contractual, however, the practical ideas outlined seem to suggest that the main responsibility of government is to withdraw from responsibility. Therefore it still fits with the neoliberal outlook of other Coalition policies discussed.

In every document, individuals seem to be placed as rational actors responding appropriately to the provision of information, advice and incentives. The market is also a key player, responsible either for environmental problems – 'market failure' – or as central to their solutions (e.g. DEFRA, 2013a). Government's role is situated in terms of facilitating individuals, but generally within the terms above rather than in direct provision. This is particularly emphasised in the later Coalition-period documents. This individualism fits within the neoliberal paradigm and also, as highlighted by Vallance and colleagues (2011) runs the risk of missing issues of social sustainability. Additionally, highlighting consumerism as the face of individual action de-emphasises the opportunity to participate in more formal politics (Skill, 2012).

The exception to this idea of a rational actor is in the case of 'vulnerable' groups – often encompassing disabled people – in relation to domestic energy efficiency measures to address fuel poverty, the much-lauded concessionary bus travel, and voluntary or NGO projects aimed specifically at disabled people. That having a warm home or a free bus travel only addresses two of the many barriers disabled people may face relating to reducing energy use in the home or choosing lower carbon transport does not appear to be recognised, however.

Neither does the inconsistent nature of voluntary provision or the impact of welfare 'reforms' and other economic policies that may suppress incomes. That in most documents there is also not much of an active role described for citizens, regardless of disability status, may potentially explain the increased focus on individual lifestyles in the wider green movement, as a reaction to government inaction. Alternatively it may explain why many people outside that movement do not express interest in taking action. Both of these attitudes, however, may be problematic for disabled people (as will be explored in the empirical part of this thesis).

Finally, there are implications of the concern with economic growth and the related drive for greater levels of employment present in EU and UK policy. This may affect the ability of all citizens to carry out their environmental responsibilities outlined in the various policies – such as altering their consumption patterns or lowering their energy use, both of which usually imply an increase in personal labour. Barry (2006) suggests that states might require individuals to give up a certain amount of their time to environmental action; MacGregor (2006) among others has noted how different individuals' statuses and societal roles may determine the amount of time they are able to devote to their citizenly environmental responsibilities. Compulsion seems unlikely, therefore increased employment levels may well decrease the time available to dedicate to decreasing consumption and energy use. Again, a neoliberal approach has the potential to limit progress toward sustainability.

2.5.1 The 'environmental citizen' of policy

The discussion above considered the role of citizens in sustainability-focused policies; this final section develops further the implications of those roles for disabled people. Although sustainability-focused policies are not explicitly ableist, where individuals are mentioned – such as in UK documents – implicit assumptions are evident regarding their characteristics and abilities. For example, UK citizens complying with the sustainability policies described in this chapter are expected to:

- Turn off energy using products that are not in use
- Buy products that are more efficient
- Install energy efficiency measures in their homes

- Manage their energy and expenditure intelligently
- Make lower carbon travel choices
- Make use of mail preference services
- Choose reusable, second hand or longer life items
- Avoid food waste and grow their own food/choose local, sustainably sourced produce
- Use charity shops/community swaps
- Make use of outdoor space e.g. harvesting rainwater, home composting
- Volunteer to help improve the local environment

Even from this fairly limited list a picture of an 'environmental' citizen begins to emerge – the implicit role of citizens is thus embodied (Hobson, 2013). The 'ability expectations' (Wolbring, 2012) displayed here are of someone who is financially and intellectually able to make expenditure/product choices, someone who owns their home and has either the financial capital or the time and energy to negotiate the ECO initiative, someone who has access to green space, someone who *has* travel options, and who has access to community facilities such as charity shops and the time and energy to volunteer in local projects. All of these ability expectations may be more difficult for certain disabled individuals to attain. Additionally, where disabled people are mentioned, in sustainability-focused policies it is notable that framings of 'vulnerability' and an implicit *lack* of choice are used. Examples include people on benefits living in rented accommodation that might be poorly insulated, or the emphasis on concessionary bus travel for disabled people which seems to ignore or miss other issues of inaccessibility related to bus travel. There seems to be a disconnect between this image of vulnerability and the active, choice-making individual described more generally in the sustainability-focused policies, as well as the more active individual of disability-focused policies.

Barr and colleagues (2011a) highlight that within a neoliberal paradigm the 'citizen-consumer' is crucial for managing environmental issues. Imrie (2014) describes the influence of neoliberal governance on areas of policy such as housing and transport, and highlights the increasing momentum towards privatisation and individualisation of responsibility for various aspects of life, such as mobility. This is accompanied by the focus of policy towards enabling a disembodied consumer/worker. The analysis has parallels with this chapter

noting the active citizen of disability policy at the same time as the disembodied, individualised 'environmental citizen' described above. The 'active citizen' of both sustainability- and disability-focused policies also has many similarities with what Goodley describes as 'the valued citizen of the twenty-first century' (Goodley, 2014, p.23). This citizen fits the ideals of neoliberalism – an individualised, independent and self-supporting citizen who minimises her reliance on the state (Imrie, 2014; Fisher, 2007; Poole, 2000).

2.6 Summary

This chapter has considered various issues arising in relation to sustainability-focused and disability-focused policies across multiple policy levels. It seems clear that ambitious statements in UN declarations have not translated into concrete actions. Additionally, neoliberal EU and UK policies and strategy have prioritised the concerns of the market and individuals, leading to an overall weak sustainability approach, as well as individual approaches to disability affecting disability-focused policies. The recent economic crises have also influenced these policies. Although on the surface this has been positive with regard to environmental protection – as could be seen from EU monitoring reports – the impacts on individuals and the longer-term sustainability agenda seem negative. Individual action appears at the same time encouraged and constrained by these policies, particularly at the national level. That there are synergies between approaches to disability equality and sustainability in policy does not address the fact that both seem to be inadequate for addressing these issues.

Disability-focused policies, however, are rather silent on sustainability issues – as have been disability groups, often due to limited resources (Adebowale et al., 2009, Innes, 2009). Some sustainability concerns may be implicit – such as built environmental access being a key part of accessing education or employment, or caring about natural environmental issues as simply another part of political and cultural participation. Given the (albeit limited) focus on individuals in most sustainability policies, however, it is argued that sustainability needs to become a focus of disability equality also. In particular, disabled people's inclusion in

these kinds of sustainability policies has not been explored before, and this seems to be a gap in the focus of disability studies, which examines policies impacting upon other areas of disabled people's lives. Similarly, how ability expectations identified in policy impact on disabled people's lived experiences is important for considering how barriers to sustainable lifestyles and perspectives on environmental responsibilities are constructed. These issues will be further explored in relation to local policies as part of the empirical research in Chapter Eight. The next chapter turns to theory and the contributions and limitations of two key academic concepts for this thesis, environmental justice and environmental citizenship.

3 Environmental Justice and Environmental Citizenship

This chapter considers the main currents of more theoretical literatures concerned with the move towards sustainability in global north contexts. It presents a strategic selection of key areas most relevant for this thesis. All of the topics chosen, despite broad literatures and research bases, share common reference points: firstly, a theme of environmental sustainability and recognition of anthropogenic (man-made) climate change; and secondly, directly relevant to this research, a scarcity of theorising and research which explicitly considers disability equality. This chapter therefore considers these topics from a disability studies perspective. It highlights potential synergies and raises questions about how disability equality might be included as an aim of future social research and theory concerned with environmental sustainability. Two approaches that have been, or specifically aimed to be, influential with regard to UK policy-making are discussed – those of pro-environmental behaviours and social practices. Additionally, the environmental justice and environmental citizenship literatures are considered, given their relevance for many of the synergies and tensions already raised with regard to sustainability and disability equality.

Many issues explored across these theoretical areas are relevant to both disabled and non-disabled individuals. However, disability-specific issues – such as additional barriers faced or specific requirements for accessibility – have often been absent or only addressed in a limited way. Other disadvantaged groups (such as those from BME backgrounds, older people, and women, for example) have similarly been missing in pro-environmental behaviours, social practices and environmental citizenship literatures. Research has also begun to address those gaps; the environmental justice literature, for example, arising from the concerns of BME groups.

There have recently been positive developments with the visibility of disabled people in some of these areas (for example Abbott and Porter, 2013; Adebowale et al., 2009; Wolbring, 2009), which were outlined in Chapter One. Disability studies, however, has come late to the debate. Both the existing and ongoing research and literature from researchers of other disadvantaged

groups, as well as disability studies research on related topics such as citizenship and access to environments, can therefore indicate areas of relevance for disability studies.

3.1 Pro-environmental behaviours and social practices

As discussed in the previous chapter, the understandings of disability equality and sustainability issues in policy enable a particular version of environmentalism – or a good ‘environmental’ citizen, to be detected. In the UK this is influenced in part by the decisions government departments make about which research advice to fund and to follow. DEFRA in particular is responsible for a significant amount of policies addressing individual citizens, such as the Waste Strategy (2013a) regarding and the Natural Environment White Paper (2011a). Two approaches have influenced – or have attempted to influence – this area of policy in recent years: pro-environmental behaviours and social practices.

A significant amount of DEFRA’s research funding into promoting sustainability at the individual or household level has in recent years been awarded to research that focuses on pro-environmental behaviours and related issues (DEFRA, 2011c). This research has drawn on a ‘behavioural economics’ approach (DEFRA, 2008c), which employs theory and research from social sciences such as social psychology, economics and sociology. This in turn has focused on individuals, pro-environmental behaviours, and how to explain the gap between attitudes and action (for example Lorenzoni et al., 2007; Stern 2000), as well as how to encourage and facilitate the pro-environmental behaviours of ‘environmental citizens’ (for example Clarke and Agyeman, 2011; Barr and Gilg, 2006; Barr, 2003; Hobson, 2003). This is a significantly empirical strand of literature which emerged from long-running debates about who has, or should take, responsibility for environmental issues (Eden, 1993).

Eden (1993) was one of the first to qualitatively explore how individuals perceived environmental responsibilities in the UK. Her work was a response to research in the late 1970s and 1980s which had focused more on the environmentalism of groups. In her opinion this work ‘tended to underplay the

role of individual responsibility' (Eden, 1993, p.1743) by focusing on attitudes or more structural concerns in which individual perspectives were obscured. Eden's research was undertaken in the context of a long-established period of Conservative government which was encouraging individual action to reduce environmental impact within a wider paradigm of consumer sovereignty. She interviewed activists and non-activists in a UK city and found that individuals' perceptions of responsibility were related to their perceptions of efficacy, i.e. those that believed their actions were significant described feeling the most personal responsibility. In contrast, those who did not feel their actions had influence tended to ascribe responsibility elsewhere.

Similar findings have been reported by other researchers, for example Harrison and colleagues (1996) whose comparative research also noted differences between the UK and Dutch contexts. Although much research has been undertaken since Eden's initial study, two strands were identified as particularly relevant for this thesis. The first is the work mentioned above, researching issues of individual environmental responsibility following on from Eden (Dobson, 2010). This has also considered the relationship between citizens and environmental concerns. While the term 'environmental citizenship' began to be used by these researchers (for example Macnaghten and Urry, 1998), it was not at first consistently used with reference to more theoretical concepts (see for example Burgess et al., 1998). The second strand, however, emerged from a more theoretical perspective and will be explored later in the chapter.

Returning to the DEFRA-funded research into pro-environmental behaviours, the dominance of economic- and social psychological- informed environmental research in policymaking has been highlighted by Shove and others (2010, 2012). Perhaps due to this continuing dominance, a starting point for this thesis came from an exploration of academic and policy literature addressing pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour. Its lack of emphasis on structural barriers, and in particular the types of barriers likely to be experienced by disabled people, were considered significant. Its focus on individuals also led to a concern that this type of literature might be incompatible with social understandings of disability. In spite of this, pro-environmental behaviours research still has relevance due to its links to concepts of environmental

citizenship and concern for agency-oriented approaches alongside more structural issues.

Over the last decade, DEFRA commissioned a number of pieces of research to understand which types of individuals were most likely to engage (or otherwise) with particular pro-environmental behaviours, resulting in the creation of a framework for pro-environmental behaviours (DEFRA, 2008a). This research used a segmentation approach to identify particular (dis)engagement styles and investigate the best ways to target and influence behaviour change with individuals in each of these segments. Different demographics were considered, such as age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, with the significant omission of disability status. Disability also appears to be invisible or ignored more generally across this strand of research. This is not surprising given the wider context of neoliberal individualism targeting environmental responsibility at individuals, as well as Morris' (2005) work that described how disabled people are often more likely to be considered as recipients of other people's citizenship responsibilities than as citizens in their own right.

Nonetheless, a significant finding emerging from this strand of research was the identification of the so-called 'gap' between environmental attitudes and behaviours, i.e. that having environmental concerns does not necessarily lead to pro-environmental actions (e.g. Blake, 1999). Researchers based in social-psychological fields have therefore examined the links between attitudes and behaviours (such as Hines et al., 1987) and potential reasons for the gap between the two. External contextual factors – social norms, economic or institutional constraints – have been considered as well as 'internal' factors such as lack of knowledge, motivation or a weak locus of control (for example Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Blake, 1999).

The most recent evolution of DEFRA-funded research in this area was the Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group (SLRG) directed by Professor Tim Jackson. This direction of research – with its strongly economic and psychological approaches – has been strongly critiqued by those coming from a more sociological perspective, however. They suggest that the focus on human behaviour as the critical factor in addressing climate change leads to a lack of attention to more structural and social actants (e.g. Shove, 2010). This argument also has parallels with Campbell's (2008b) suggestion that ableism

works to shut down the imagination in relation to alternative perspectives on disability. As Shove argues: 'it is important to notice that [this approach] and the research industry which it sustains (and which sustains it) are part of an interlocking landscape of thought which constrains and prevents policy imagination of the kind required' (Shove, 2010, p.1282). In this respect Shove has led the charge for a social practice approach to the examination of environmental sustainability. This has also won funding from DEFRA in the form of the Sustainable Practices Research Group (SPRG) managed by Shove and others, although a notably smaller grant (DEFRA, 2011c). The debate over which of these approaches is most valuable to the project of sustainability is still an open question (including being the subject of a seminar workshop held as this thesis was being written up), although some (such as Darnton et al., 2011) consider that both have value in relation to promoting change towards sustainable lifestyles.

Shove's approach draws on the ontological foundations of Giddens (1984) and also building on work by classic theorists such as Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Bourdieu (see Shove et al., 2012 for a summary). Because of her influence on this work in UK and policy settings, it is Shove's approach that will be predominantly drawn upon. It is acknowledged, however, that her approach is one of a number of different social practice theories. A fuller description of the underlying concepts will be outlined in the methodology chapter. Briefly, however, those researching sustainability issues from a social practice perspective look to describe and explain how particular practices – such as travel, water use, or energy use (e.g. Pullinger et al., 2013; Shove and Walker, 2010; Shove, 2003) – have evolved, and how they might continue to be transformed in more sustainable directions (e.g. Spurling et al., 2013; Shove, 2003). A key element of this is identifying and attempting to re-frame what is considered 'normal' – to explain, for example, the shift towards wearing seatbelts in cars (Spurling et al., 2013).

The usefulness of social practice approaches as opposed to the economic and psychological research described above is that the focus is broader than merely the individual. Additionally, a practice approach can address ideas beyond the status quo toward considering 'significant societal transformation' (Shove, 2010, p.1277) around how society (re)produces notions of everyday life and the

consumption patterns embedded therein. Practice approaches also consider the implications of an alteration in one practice on another because of the way that multiple practices are intertwined in everyday life (Warde, 2005). While Shove's own work has considered broad socio-technical transitions, others using a similar practice approach (such as Day and Hitchings, 2011; Hargreaves, 2011) have focused on more situated practices and contexts, for example the warmth practices of older people or practices within a specific organisation.

Social practice approaches have faced criticism, however, from those who warn that in attempting to go beyond the individual they are in danger of ignoring agency and rendering individuals merely passive (Sayer, 2013). Sayer suggests that a consequence of this could be the top-down imposition of policies rather than involving people in decisions about themselves. Additionally, practice theorists to date have not fully engaged with issues of inequality and who is affected (and how) by alterations in practice (Walker, 2013). Warde (2005) highlights a number of arguments for considering the social differentiation of practices – such as class or place – but this kind of analysis is underused. From a disability studies perspective, the idea of focusing on the 'normal' is potentially problematic. As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.1.3), the idea of 'normal', for example assuming a 'normal' embodiment, casts disabled bodies in a negative light. While an attempt to reframe what is considered 'normal' has significant potential to further the inclusion of disabled people, if what is identified as 'normal' in the first place ignores issues of disability then any reframing is likely to perpetuate oppression. Examples of this will be discussed further in Chapter Seven. Practice approaches are nevertheless relevant for this thesis because of the potential to systematically demonstrate disabling aspects of different pro-environmental practices and to situate these beyond the individual. For this reason, the analysis of the empirical research will consider the data from both pro-environmental behaviours and social practice perspectives, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Both pro-environmental behaviours and pro-environmental practices can be conceptualised, in different ways, as part of or constituting a form of 'sustainable lifestyle' (Shove et al, 2012; Barr and Gilg, 2006).

This thesis has benefited from, and aims to build upon, the work of researchers on both sides of the debate, neither of which has to date significantly engaged

with the issue of disability. The individual approach has been foundational in considering the issues faced by citizens engaging with environmental responsibility and is useful from a straightforward 'barriers approach' to accessibility issues. Equally, a practice approach may have more potential to address a move towards sustainability that encompasses social issues including accessibility and could also be compatible with a social understanding of disability. The current discussion, however, now moves toward different theoretical considerations of sustainability issues, and their relevance for disability equality. As Chapter Two began to introduce, the concept of an 'environmental citizen' is important for this thesis. Although there are different ways it can be defined, the theoretical environmental citizenship literature represents an attempt to consider how individuals might fit within issues of sustainability and environmental protection that have been so far outlined. It is to this literature that the chapter now turns.

3.2 Environmental citizenship

The concept of 'environmental citizenship' (this term is used here as a general label for 'environmental', 'ecological', 'sustainability' and 'green' citizenship concepts) is central to this research because it incorporates or has direct links to many key issues already outlined: environmental concerns and attitudes, pro-environmental behaviours, as well as issues of environmental justice which will be discussed at the end of the chapter. Literatures concerned with environmental citizenship may be implicit due to a concern with any or all of the issues above. This section, however, will outline environmental citizenship as an explicit theoretical concept emerging from political thought and its associated critiques.

3.2.1 Key concepts in citizenship theorising

Firstly, environmental citizenship theories should be situated in the wider context of citizenship theorising. Classic theories of citizenship are concerned with the relationship between individuals and the state. Two perspectives predominate – liberal and republican. Both incorporate many different variations, complexities and spectrums of political thought and here they will be

addressed as 'ideal types' (Dwyer, 2000, p.19). Broadly speaking, liberal citizenships focus on individuals and the constituent rights that are needed to facilitate their status as citizens (see for example Schuck, 2002; Van Gunsteren, 1994). Individual freedom is a key concern. The state is viewed as having only a limited role to play in terms of ensuring individuals' freedoms and mediating where these come into conflict (Schuck 2002), although the extent of the state's role is debated between libertarian and egalitarian approaches to liberalism (Dwyer, 2000). Citizenship is generally conceived, however, as a private rather than public issue.

A further element to liberal ideas is that of value pluralism (Bell, 2005) and a focus on procedural justice – with fairness of process more important than fairness of outcome (Schuck, 2002). There is also a concern among more egalitarian liberal citizenship theorists, however, regarding issues of social inequality (Beckett, 2006b). Therefore one focus has been on individual rights such as Marshall's classic description of rights as civil, political and social (see Turner, 2006). Marshall's theory suggests that these rights create the conditions in which individuals can participate as citizens. Additionally, the neoliberal offshoot of liberal citizenship theories – rooted in a libertarian liberal perspective – is relevant here. Its impact can be seen on UK governments, for example Thatcher's Conservative government and its conception of an 'active citizen' as one who exercises the right to be a market consumer (Beckett, 2006b). Neoliberal approaches strongly oppose significant state roles. As noted in Chapter Two, this can also be seen in the current Coalition government's emphasis on private individuals taking over current government responsibilities as part of the 'big society' and reducing the role of the state (Smith, 2010).

In contrast, republican citizenship ideas emphasise the individual as a member of a community and their responsibilities as such (Dagger, 2002, 2004). The focus is on this community – in the sense of a polity or general public – and its needs are understood to take precedence over those of the individual. The concept of a rule of law is vital for defining how citizens conduct themselves for the benefit of the community, but there is also an element of self-government in helping to both make and maintain the rule of law. While liberal citizenships concentrate on the individual's freedom from interference, republican citizenships are more concerned with preventing citizens from gaining

advantage over one another. A central feature of republican citizenship is also its emphasis on civic virtue – exemplified in acts such as public participation in community affairs – to maintain its functions. This virtue depends on citizens feeling a strong sense of connection to others which in turn fosters their relationship with the state: an ethical dimension of citizenship (Dagger, 2002, 2004).

Communitarianism is a recent evolution of republican theorising. It provides a critique of liberal individualism, suggesting that the liberal assumption of an abstract individual is incorrect; rather, communities are constitutive of identities (Dagger, 2004; Dwyer, 2000). By emphasising the particular 'embedded' social setting of citizens as central for developing an individual's sense of civic virtue – as opposed to their more abstract role as part of a wider republican community – it sets itself apart from a more traditional republican perspective (Van Gunsteren, 1994; Caney, 1992). It considers the community to be the midway point between individual and state and thus it has a mediating function, keeping a balance between social order and autonomy of individuals (Etzioni, 1996). Like liberalism, it is possible to identify communitarian approaches across the political spectrum of left and right (Dwyer, 2000). Some have argued that its 'vagueness' in terms of political theory leaves it unconvincing. A number of theorists identified as communitarian might also dispute this label (Dagger, 2004). Its usefulness for this thesis, however, is its association with the politics of Tony Blair's New Labour and the concept of rights contingent on responsibilities (Dwyer 2000). More broadly, the main issue to be taken from liberal and republican theorising for this thesis is that of rights and responsibilities and the differing emphases thereon. Lister (2003, p.15) discusses 'citizenship as a status vs. citizenship as a practice' – with status applying to more liberal approaches such as rights, and practice invoking more republican ideas in terms of obligations and responsibilities.

More recent theories of citizenship have moved away from the centrality of the relationship between individual and state. Three ideas are particularly relevant to this research: cosmopolitan, pluralist and post-structural theories.

Cosmopolitan citizenship explores what it means to be a global citizen and the potential for a public sphere that extends beyond the nation state (Linklater, 1998), although it is criticised by some for being overly moral (Dobson, 2003)

while not being sufficiently innovative to improve the argument for greater global justice (Mason, 2009). Pluralist citizenships attempt to provide an argument against universalist ideas that serve to exclude those who do not conform to prevailing norms about who or what a citizen should be (Beckett, 2006b). This leads to a focus on disadvantaged groups and the increased rights they require to gain inclusion in this context. Post-structuralist ideas, finally, highlight the implications of considering individuals' multiple identities or 'subject positions' (Mouffe, 1995, p.318) in different contexts and how these are utilised on different occasions. From this perspective the gathering of citizens around a shared purpose, such as the polity, becomes inherently unstable because other causes may call on different or conflicting aspects of their identities (Beckett, 2006b). This is only a 'bare bones' summary of wide-ranging debates and ideas but it attempts to serve as a contextualising summary of some of the key ideas in the citizenship literature that have relevance to the debates that now follow.

3.2.2 Classic environmental citizenship theories

Environmental citizenship theories in this context have developed as a relatively recent offshoot from more mainstream citizenship debates among political theorists. Van Steenbergen (1994) was one of the first to synthesise ecological concerns and citizenship theories. He highlighted the contrasts between liberal citizenship ideas and their emphasis on individual freedom with the contemporary ecological paradigm that stressed the rights of nature and human responsibility towards the environment. At the same time, Twine (1994) was writing about human interdependence with the environment and the need to develop individuals' rights to a quality environment. Thus liberal, rights-based approaches, as well as a republican focus on responsibility, are both important groundings for understanding individuals' relationships with the environment. These and other early writings on environmental citizenship were directed towards wider debates within a growing sustainability literature. They attempted to soften areas of contention – such as the ecocentric versus anthropocentric or deep versus light green debates – by focusing more on the individual (Gabrielson, 2008). In so doing, however, they take a consciously

anthropocentric stance and have replicated features of wider citizenship debates such as the differing emphases on rights and responsibilities.

Two classic examples of environmental citizenship theorising exemplify these different approaches – those of Dobson (2003) and Bell (2005). Dobson's concept of 'ecological citizenship' is based on the obligations (responsibilities) of those who use more than their equitable share of ecological space and resources towards those who have less than an equitable share. The qualification for ecological citizenship is based on this injustice – only those with responsibility for reducing their share of resources 'qualify' as ecological citizens. Additionally, the obligations entailed are non-reciprocal and grounded in issues of intergenerational and international justice in terms of inequitable appropriation of ecological space. In this way it also expands beyond traditional territorial understandings of citizenship. Although cosmopolitanism, as described above, is not contained by territories, Dobson argues that it has the wrong starting point because it assumes a universal experience of 'the human community' as a single entity with obligations based on a moral imperative of compassion for others, rather than recognising injustices between different groups and considering 'specific communities of obligation' as political rather than moral (Dobson, 2003, p.22).

Dobson argues that a better concept would be what he terms 'post-cosmopolitanism' – an understanding of the asymmetries between different groups caused by injustices which therefore create political obligations on the part of the advantaged groups. He suggests that these obligations also extend into private as well as public spheres in its expectations of citizens, because of an understanding that private actions can have public impacts (for example domestic greenhouse gas emissions). Dobson argues that this concept can overcome traditional dualities such as rights versus responsibilities because of its attention to contractual and non-contractual obligations and the blurring of boundaries between public and private spheres of citizenship. It seems clear, however, that ecological citizenship fits more comfortably into a republican rather than liberal tradition of citizenship theory because responsibilities fall to citizens while rights are only afforded to the objects of citizenship (i.e. those disadvantaged by asymmetrical injustices).

Bell's (2005) approach, by contrast, is situated as emerging from – and as a response to – the liberal tradition. He emphasises citizens' rights to environmental goods, suggesting that environment is not merely property but also needs to be conceptualised as 'a provider of basic needs' (Bell, 2005, p.183). However, he also remains committed to value pluralism – citizens have the right to choose whether or not they wish to follow a more sustainable path (Gabrielson, 2008). Bell argues for a 'reasonable pluralism' (Bell, 2005, p.184) which prevents the liberal conception of environment going beyond the understanding of it as a provider of basic needs, so that citizens can still have 'reasonable disagreement' about its value. Citizens have substantive and procedural rights – the right to environmental goods and the right to claim and protect that substantive right. Additionally they have rights over their private actions; the choice to act to protect the environment, or otherwise. There are also some obligations, however; primarily of the state, but also of individuals, such as to obey 'just laws' (Bell, 2005, p.187). This refers to those that are made democratically, and which protect the previously described environmental rights. In practice, therefore, these citizens may look, superficially, much the same as Dobson's ecological citizens in terms of actions – but will probably have different value-bases for their choices.

3.2.3 Environmental citizenship and empirical research

Dobson and Bell are both highly-cited examples of theorists with differing emphases between rights and responsibilities in environmental citizenship. Their ideas encompass the most widely-used current conceptions of environmental citizenship. Many critiques – and defences – have been made of these mainstream theories, and those most relevant to this research will be highlighted further on. First, however, empirical research into these environmental citizenships should be considered. Both Dobson (2010) and Bell (2013) have authored recent reviews of this environmental citizenship literature and their findings inform this section. It should be noted that Dobson's review moves away from his original work on ecological citizenship, for example omitting aspects such as qualification for ecological citizenship based on an unjust share of environmental resources. This may be strategic, due to the review being targeted at a policy audience. However, many aspects of

ecological citizenship may still be identified in his description of the environmental citizen.

Bell (2013) suggests that research which concerns itself with environmental citizenship can be broadly categorised into three types. These are: research attempting to identify whether theoretically-defined environmental citizens exist in practice; research which assumes this existence and investigates the lived experiences of already-identified environmental citizens; and research attempting to determine environmental citizenship by examining the carriers of a particular practice. Exemplifying the first type, Wolf and colleagues (2009) investigated the existence of ecological citizenship in two Canadian contexts with a mix of activists and non-activists. They found some support for the concept in terms of participants' sense of responsibility for their environmental impact, ideas of intergenerational and international justice in participants' explanations of environmental problems, non-reciprocal understandings of their own actions, and a consideration of private as well as public action. However, they also noted that, in support of some critiques of Dobson, the effectiveness of individuals' impacts was limited. In contrast, however, Flynn and colleagues (2008), in a qualitative study based in the UK, did not find significant evidence of environmental citizenship among their participants. Dobson (2010) suggests that differences such as this may be explained by different political cultures which are more or less facilitative of the production of environmental citizens.

Horton's (2006a) exploration of the lives of environmental activists in the UK is an example of the second type of research. His participants displayed a lived environmental citizenship broadly consistent with Dobson's theory of ecological citizenship. Horton suggested that specific factors – green networks, spaces, materialities and times – were implicated in the production and reproduction of the environmental citizens in his research. Therefore this citizenship could only be broadened via a promotion of green culture through what he describes as 'green architecture' (Horton, 2006a, p.145). This again points to the importance of context for producing environmental citizenship. Finally, the third type of study points to the possibility of people being identified as environmental citizens without necessarily being aware of their role (Dobson, 2010). These types of studies have been conducted around a number of different practices – from ethical investment (Carter and Huby, 2005) to environmental volunteering

(Ellis and Waterton, 2004). However, this third type indicates a contradiction. Both Dobson and Bell suggest that the theoretical environmental citizen has a clear moral or justice-based rationale for his/her actions, as can be seen in the descriptions below, which implies an active awareness in environmental citizenship.

The theoretical work described here has been conducted in parallel with the environmental citizenship research discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to pro-environmental behaviours. Despite this, there seems to have been little interaction between the two strands of research, perhaps because of differing emphases on either empirically- or theoretically-driven work, with the earlier strand conducting empirical research for a number of years previous to that cited above. Where empirical research *has* subsequently investigated Dobson's ecological citizenship, there seems to have been little overlap with that existing empirical literature (for example Barr and Gilg, 2006; Macnaghten et al., 1995; Eden, 1993) apart from Dobson's (2010) review.

From their reviews, Dobson and Bell both characterised environmental citizens in similar ways, as outlined in Box 1 (below). Dobson and Bell also agree that a central shared tenet of any form of environmental citizenship is the concept of the common good: 'what is good for me as an individual is not necessarily good for me as a member of a social collectivity' (Dobson and Bell, 2006, p.4). Another similarity between these descriptions is that both are primarily lists of values and beliefs, although Dobson notes elsewhere that environmental citizenship can also be thought of as 'a set of substantive practices, aimed at environmental sustainability' (2010, p.7).

Additionally, the 'environmental' citizenship implied in policy in the previous chapter has been critiqued by Dobson (2010). For example, the individuals described in the Energy Efficiency Strategy (DECC, 2012) were expected to buy energy efficient products and reduce energy demand – an environmental citizenship that is primarily market-based, structured around fiscal incentives. Dobson argues that this type of citizenship risks crowding out one based on morality. There is no discussion in his own writing, however, of how the values and beliefs fundamental to Dobson and Bell's environmental citizenship might be translated into 'substantive practices'. This and other issues will now be

discussed as the chapter enters into a discussion of key critiques of these environmental citizenship theories.

Box 1: Characteristics of environmental citizens according to Dobson (2010) and Bell (2013)

The environmental citizen ...

1. believes that environmental sustainability is a common good that will not be achieved by the pursuit of individual self-interest alone;
2. is moved by other-regarding motivations as well as self-interested ones;
3. believes that ethical and moral knowledge is as important as techno-scientific knowledge in the context of pro-environmental behaviour change;
4. believes that other people's environmental rights engender environmental responsibilities which the environmental citizen should redeem;
5. believes that these responsibilities are due not only to one's neighbours or fellow-nationals but also to distant strangers (distant in space and even in time);
6. has an awareness that private environment-related actions can have public environment-related impacts.

(Dobson, 2010, p.18)

First, the environmental citizen should be concerned about more than their local environment.... Second, environmental citizenship is concerned with environmental duties or responsibilities at least as much as, and probably more than, it is concerned with environmental rights.... Third, the environmental citizen should be concerned about his or her individual everyday behaviours and their direct impact on the environment.

(Bell, 2013, p.349)

3.2.4 Key critiques

A number of critiques have been addressed toward these theories – and theorists from liberal or republican traditions have variously critiqued each other (see for example Dobson (2003) or Barry (2006) for critiques of a liberal environmental citizenship, Hayward (2006) for a critique of Dobson's ecological citizenship, or Gabrielson (2008) for a broader critique of liberal- and republican-informed environmental citizenship theorising). In this section, the critiques most relevant for this research are highlighted – universalism, a neglect of embodiment, an over-focus on individuals, and potential co-option by neoliberal ideology. Many of these critiques have been developed by feminist

scholars. A disability studies perspective informed by these critiques will be presented in the following section.

A strong critique of mainstream environmental citizenship theories is that they have un-problematically replicated many contested features of classic citizenship literatures (Gabrielson and Parady, 2010). A key issue highlighted is the universalist assumptions about the nature of citizens. Universalism implies a 'one-size-fits-all' model of citizenship. It means there is a lack of consideration for those outside of prevailing norms about whom or what a citizen should be (Beckett, 2006b). One way that universalism excludes is through marginalising the experiences of those perceived to be experiencing environmental injustices (Latta, 2007). Although less evident in more recent writings, Dobson (2003) has historically focused his own conceptualisation of citizenship on those who are currently powerful – those who take more than their fair share of environmental resources. The people who suffer from this unjust allocation of resources, however, are at risk of being side-lined and objectified – treated as recipients of others' citizenship duties rather than as active citizens in their own right (Latta, 2007).

Post-structural citizenship theories can be used to critique universalism by highlighting the importance of considering individuals' different identities. Beckett (2005, 2006b) suggests that because from a post-structural perspective identities are no longer assumed to be singular or stable, traditional shared identities that defined citizenship such as nationality hold less power (Beckett, 2005; Ellison, 2000). Despite the 'post-cosmopolitanism' of Dobson's ecological citizenship, however, a singular, normative understanding of the citizen is still implied. Similarly, although in Bell's environmental citizenship citizens are able to disagree and have different ideas about what actions they take, there is still a universalist idea of rational individualism.

A lack of consideration of embodiment has also been highlighted as a problem of wider citizenship theories. Citizens in mainstream understandings of citizenship are often 'disembodied' as they have no need to concern themselves with physical needs – because other non-citizens are performing everyday duties in their place (Lister, 2003). This general neglect of the body leads to structures and spaces – both physical and social – that are un-problematically, sub-consciously, designed around the embodied form of members of the

dominant group because they do not recognise the specificity of their own group features – leading to the exclusion of those who do not share the dominant group's characteristics (Beckett, 2006b; MacGregor, 2006; Hastings and Thomas, 2005).

Furthermore, ecofeminists have highlighted concerns about environmental citizenship theories that ignore embodiment. Ecofeminism is an offshoot of the 1970s feminist movement which covers a diverse range of thinking regarding the links between the oppression of women and the environment (Lorentzen and Eaton 2002). Gabrielson and Parady (2010) argue from this perspective that mainstream environmental citizenship theories prioritise a particularly 'westernised', disembodied idea of citizenship; an 'epistemological privilege' that excludes those from other traditions. There is also a tendency to artificially separate human and non-human nature (Alaimo, 2010). If bodies are 'inescapably embedded in both social and natural contexts' (Gabrielson and Parady, 2010, p.381), however, then an 'ontological approach' is needed wherein citizenship is fundamentally linked to the body. Gabrielson and Parady name this concept 'corporeal citizenship'.

Bell (2005), however, argues against the critique that liberal citizenship ignores embodiment and the environment. He suggests that instead they have been poorly conceptualised in classical theorising – with the environment understood in terms of property, and the body in relation to it but as separate and unattached. He proposes that a better fit for liberal theory would be to additionally conceptualise the environment as 'a provider of basic needs' (Bell, 2005, p.183) which also implies embodiment in terms of meeting basic physical needs. He suggests that liberal citizens need to support environmental sustainability to enable the rights of future generations in this regard. Dobson (2003), meanwhile, suggests that feminism, alongside globalisation, provides the context for his version of post-cosmopolitan citizenship. He argues that the feminist idea of linking public and private spheres is relevant for his concept, but still appears to miss the embodied aspects of private sphere duties that are then implied in ecological citizenship.

Similarly, if this critique is considered alongside the characteristics of environmental citizens outlined in the previous section, a number of issues arise. Dobson and Bell's descriptions of environmental citizens are highly

normative, but appear to be completely disembodied. Despite this, Dobson also describes environmental citizenship 'as a set of substantive practices, aimed at environmental sustainability' (Dobson, 2010, p.7). The assumption appears to be that the normative values and beliefs of environmental citizens translate seamlessly into actions. Alternatively, it assumes environmental citizens can be identified via their practices: actions may be evidence of the existence of the values and beliefs that signify the environmental citizen. This seems to elide the substantial literature discussed earlier in the chapter around the so-called value-action gap (Blake, 1999) and evidence that attitudes often do not translate into behaviours for a variety of reasons, both internal and external to individuals.

Relatedly, it has been demonstrated that high levels of environmental concern can still correlate with high environmental impact. Wolf and colleagues (2009) found that the ecological citizens identified in their research undertook high impact activities such as flying and tended to alter only limited aspects of their lifestyles, despite subscribing to the values of Dobson's ecological citizenship. Similarly, Barr and colleagues (2011b), although not specifically focusing on ecological citizenship, found in their research that those demonstrating the most environmental commitment at home also had the highest environmental footprints in terms of air travel. Without a clear definition of the environmental citizen's actions, it seems possible for an individual to 'look like' an environmental citizen by displaying the correct values, regardless of their actions.

Conversely, those who undertake pro-environmental actions *without* expressing these values might go unrecognised as environmental citizens, despite making a contribution toward the overall aims of environmental citizenship (i.e. reducing environmental impacts). Hobson (2013) terms this latter group 'accidental environmentalists'. Capacity is thus important to consider. Additionally, a more specific consideration of the practicalities of measuring and defining environmental citizenship is needed. The omission of these considerations also raises questions about whether a disembodied concept of environmental citizenship may even be counterproductive to sustainability goals.

A further critique of these theories is their emphasis on (universalist, disembodied) individuals. Too close a focus on individuals may draw attention away from the wider structural contexts which influence and constrain them

(Melo-Escrihuela, 2008). States and governments may deliberately emphasise individual actions because this would leave the overall system unaltered. It is these institutions that have the power to implement policies which enable citizens to fulfil their obligations, however, for example by asserting their rights and implementing them in practice.

Middlemiss (2010) provides an analysis of responsibility in relation to theories of sustainable consumption, ecological citizenship and ecological footprints. The ecological footprint measures how much environmental space and resources an individual uses (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996). Middlemiss suggests that 'the individual's responsibility to live a sustainable lifestyle can be framed as the responsibility of society to provide infrastructures for an individual's sustainable lifestyle' (Middlemiss, 2010, p.158). She differentiates between individuals' obligations based on four measurements of capacity: 'personal', such as an individual's resources and understanding of sustainability issues; 'infrastructural', meaning the facilities available and accessible to them in their community; 'organisational', relating to the resources of any group of which the individual is a member; and 'cultural', such as the particular upbringing and socialisation the individual has had and how that has influenced their understanding of sustainability (Middlemiss, 2010, p.160).

Depending on their capacities in each of these areas (which may also change over time) and the relative size of their ecological footprints, different individuals will have different responsibilities regarding sustainable practices. Therefore the footprint of responsibility may shrink or grow. Middlemiss terms this a 'contextualised ecological footprint' (Middlemiss, 2010, p.163). Dobson has again, to some extent, begun to address this critique in recent work by acknowledging the need for government-led policy and strategy which is facilitative of environmental citizenship (Dobson and Valencia Saiz, 2013).

A final issue is the 'dovetail' (MacGregor, 2006) between an environmental citizenship that emphasises duties, and an implied neoliberal citizenship that prizes individualism and independence. MacGregor points out that it is too easy for environmental citizenship to be co-opted by neoliberal agendas and thus obscure the importance of addressing structural inequalities. This also feeds into the notion that the only problem is a lack of education in terms of transitioning ordinary citizens to environmental citizenship. It is easy to see

parallels here with the implied (environmental) citizen of policy described in Chapter Two – the rational individual responding to information and price signals. MacGregor suggests, from a feminist perspective, that a more just conception of environmental citizenship would incorporate aspects of Marshall's theory of social rights regarding the need for enabling conditions for the performance of citizenship.

3.2.5 The contribution of disability studies

Disability studies has always been concerned with citizenship in terms of the full and active participation of disabled people in society. Beckett (2006b) has proffered a disability studies critique of citizenship theorising. The disabled population is diverse due to mediating effects of other aspects of identity (Beckett, 2005). This has relevance for the post-structural critique of universalism described above. The issue of universalism, as noted earlier, also means that environmental citizenship runs the risk of side-lining those who do not fall under its definition of citizenship. This mirrors the treatment disabled people have often received with regard to citizenship more generally (Morris, 2005).

Morris uses Marshall's three citizenship rights – civil, political and social – to argue that each is a precondition enabling disabled people to fulfil citizenship responsibilities. Thus, society has a responsibility to all citizens, including disabled people, to ensure they are *able* to carry out these duties (Morris, 2005). As Turner (2006) describes, Marshall's classic description of citizenship – as premised on three aspects of rights – assumed that these would be earned by contributing through employment, military service or childbearing. As discussed below, however, disabled people may face considerable barriers to all of these potential contributions because structures and spaces are not designed with their embodiment in mind (Beckett, 2006b).

Focusing on environmental citizenship, exclusion may occur through complete lack of recognition. Dobson's (2003) ecological citizenship, for example, is concerned with individuals' ecological footprints. By considering global resources and population, it is possible to calculate an equitable amount of environmental space and resources for each individual. According to Dobson

(2003), if an individual's ecological footprint is larger than this equitable amount, that person needs to reduce it. This is his qualification for ecological citizenship.

In the UK, there are likely *few* individuals – even in low-income groups – who do not qualify as ecological citizens according to Dobson's definition. Caird and Roy (2010) found that 90% of their sample of over 1,000 UK households met the criteria, and that there was only a weak link between income and ecological footprint. Therefore, disabled people living in the UK are likely have larger than equitable ecological footprints; part of the problem, from an ecological perspective. On a global scale, however, the majority of disabled people are likely to have smaller-than-equitable ecological footprints. This is due to their over-representation in low-income groups – which tend to have smaller ecological footprints – in developing countries which also generally have smaller ecological footprints (WHO, 2011; Polack, 2008; UNEP, 2007; Wackernagel and Rees, 1996). Therefore, these disabled people would not be considered candidates for Dobson's (2003) ecological citizenship.

Dobson states that as a matter of justice all those whose footprint is larger than the global equitable level need to reduce it - therefore disabled people in the UK are implicated. However, he does not distinguish between the different circumstances or potential for relative poverty of those in this group. Although acknowledging the difficulties of working out exact individual obligations, his main concern is the matter of justice between two broad groups, and therefore the obligation for those in the advantaged group to act more sustainably. He also does not address how or where these obligations fit in with other aspects of daily life – except that 'ecological citizenship is all about everyday living' (Dobson, 2003, p.138).

This implies a lack of recognition of embodiment. Given that disabled people face exclusion and may have additional needs, the meaning of 'everyday living' will be different from one person to the next. For example, it could mean relying on a ventilator (Leipoldt, 2006) or maintaining a constant temperature in their living space to limit symptoms and enable activity (Summers, 2008). Neither of these is a simple lifestyle measure that could be easily altered by an individual. By emphasising the responsibility of the citizen to do their part, or to 'avail themselves of the opportunities for collective action' (Dobson, 2003, p.103) if they encounter obstacles to fulfilling their obligations, Dobson overlooks the

contextual and embodied factors that may constrain individuals. Disabled people in the UK may therefore be multiply situated as both oppressors (in terms of inequitable environmental impact) and oppressed (in terms of barriers to reducing this) – again, problematic for universalist approaches. Although he has more recently acknowledged the need for government action to facilitate environmental citizenship (Dobson and Valencia Saiz, 2013), this issue with regard to disabled people remains unaddressed.

Embodiment – or the lack of it – thus becomes a key concern. While some feminist debates have been critiqued by disability theorists, such as the ‘ethic of care’ (see Lister, 2003; Morris, 1997), the critique of the disembodiment of mainstream citizenship theories is useful for describing the problems disabled people face. Charles and Thomas (2007, p.210) describe the ‘continuing ambiguity about the appropriateness of recognizing the impaired body as a candidate for full political citizenship’. As previously noted, structures or practices that assume a certain embodiment (that of the dominant group) can lead to those with different characteristics being excluded (see for example Hastings and Thomas, 2005). As a disadvantaged group, disabled people may be excluded by the design of these structures and spaces, leading to problems performing the duties expected of citizens and thus to conceptualisations of disabled people as ‘outside the category of personhood’ (Beckett, 2006b, p.165).

Additionally, MacGregor (2006) notes that lay interpretations of environmental citizenship associate it with duties. Performance of those duties thus becomes a signifier of status. In this context, it becomes a concern of justice because not everyone has equal opportunity to fulfil their responsibilities – ‘rights in many ways *facilitate* the performance of duties’ (MacGregor, 2006, p.117). If disabled people go unrecognised, as in the above example of ecological citizenship, this facilitation will not occur, leading to exclusion. If disabled people are instead conceptualised as targets of citizenship duties, for example portrayed as ‘vulnerable’ as in policy discourses such as regarding fuel poverty, they will also be at risk of being treated as exceptions to the rule. Exemption from citizenly responsibilities in this way again leads to exclusion from participation. This raises questions about how these kinds of exclusion might impact disabled people’s lived experiences of environmental citizenship.

Despite the lack of embodiment in ecological citizenship, Horton's (2006a) research with identified 'environmental citizens' provides some hints that it is still assumed. As Horton himself notes, his environmental citizens were largely white, educated and middle class. By implication they were also child-free (and presumably free of other caring responsibilities) due to his finding that parenthood was a contributor to the decline of environmental activities. Significantly, however, (but not addressed in the work) Horton's environmental citizens travelled mainly on foot or by bike, and one of two central meeting places they frequented (and which Horton identified as constitutive of their environmental citizenship) is located on a first floor, up a flight of stairs with no level access (while the second, according to its website, has only recently installed a lift to its upper floors). Both of these factors imply that these environmental citizens are physically healthy with no significant mobility-related impairments. This again raises questions about the inclusivity of lived forms of environmental citizenship.

Beckett's (2006b) work suggests a possible way forward. She uses the concept of vulnerability to explain the experience of disability in relation to citizenship. She acknowledges the negative connotations of the term (such as the definition outlined in Chapter One section 1.1.1). Her conceptualisation, however, is based on vulnerability as a universal human experience related to 'the fragile and contingent nature of personhood... we are all 'vulnerable' in some respect' (Beckett, 2006b, p.3). On this understanding, the shared experience of potential or actual vulnerability is a reason for solidarity and can form the basis for an inclusive model of citizenship. She describes this as:

a process of proactive engagement in a radical democracy, the aim of this engagement being *the achievement of human rights for all citizens*, and these rights being determined on *the basis of a universal acceptance of vulnerability*. (Beckett, 2006b p.195, emphases in original)

How this might be applied to environmental citizenship will be explored later in the thesis, in the light of the empirical findings. It seems clear from this short discussion, however, that a disability studies critique has much to offer the environmental citizenship literature. This will be returned to in the light of the empirical findings later in this thesis. Environmental citizenship, however, has also been critiqued as 'insufficiently robust' (Agyeman and Evans, 2006, p.201) to address those who are not convinced to alter their lifestyles by rational,

individualised arguments. Despite this, environmental citizenship is still relevant because of its significance for participants' accounts in the pilot study and its potential to incorporate agency. Nevertheless, the environmental justice paradigm is suggested as a better foundation for action towards environmental equity (Agyeman and Evans, 2006). Charles and Thomas (2007), furthermore, have used the specific issue of Deafness to argue that concepts of environmental justice need to be synthesised with those of political citizenship to explain disabled people's exclusion from environmental policymaking. Environmental justice was also foundational for the development of the concept of 'just sustainability', which as discussed in Chapter One provides a comprehensive and socially-aware definition of sustainability with potential for the inclusion of disability equality. Therefore this literature merits discussion in the final part of this chapter.

3.3 Environmental justice

The concept of environmental justice originated in the USA in the 1980s (Agyeman, 2005). It related to issues of distributive justice regarding the disproportionate placement of polluting industries in minority ethnic communities, and procedural justice regarding the decision-making processes involved in choosing these sites. This original definition has since broadened to incorporate the equitable distribution of environmental 'goods' and 'bads' to impoverished and disadvantaged groups more generally (Agyeman, 2005). In the UK, the concept of environmental justice developed more recently as the meeting point between ideas of sustainable development and social justice (Bulkeley and Walker, 2005; Agyeman, 2002). Another development in environmental justice theorising has been the call for the inclusion of not just distribution and participation (procedural justice), but also recognition (Schlosberg, 2004). Drawing on the work of theorists such as Young (1990) and Fraser (2000), Schlosberg argues that recognition has been under-theorised in regard to broader theories of justice but can be seen in the claims of the environmental justice movement. Recognition in the context of justice, according to Fraser (2000), is about the recognition of status in terms of being

an equal participant in society. *Misrecognition*, therefore, occurs when social institutions portray an individual or group 'as inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible' (Fraser, 2000, p.113), leading to 'social subordination' – an inability to participate fully in society. Fraser's definition of recognition is not the only understanding of this concept, but it is the one that has been adopted most often by environmental justice authors (Bulkeley et al., 2014) and so it will also be utilised here. It is acknowledged, however, that Fraser's understanding was developed as a response to Honneth's concept of recognition and there is unresolved debate between the two (see for example Fraser and Honneth, 2003).

Recognition claims identified by Schlosberg include those of diverse cultures and identities threatened by 'a growing global monoculture' (Schlosberg, 2004, p.254), as well as claims of indigenous groups regarding environmental destruction. Integrating the different justice claims is also important; addressing them means not merely understanding the issues but also how they intersect. Schlosberg argued that environmental justice theorising had (at the time of writing) focused primarily on distribution, although Agyeman (2002) was contemporarily highlighting issues of recognition in all but name, if from a more practice-based perspective. Walker and Bulkeley (2006), moreover, highlighted a need for environmental justice to be rigorously defined and/or theorised. They noted that the under-theorising of environmental justice may be related to its social movement roots and common-sense definitions of environmental justice. However, the risk of co-option of the term 'environmental justice' by political agendas means 'keeping hold of a (radical) sense of justice may be important' (Walker and Bulkeley, 2006, p.656) and thus a critical perspective is necessary. Schlosberg's 'trivalent' concept of environmental justice has thus been significant for environmental justice theorists (e.g. Bulkeley et al., 2014; Walker and Day, 2012; Walker, 2009). Walker and Day (2012) for example, apply this concept to fuel poverty in the UK, highlighting aspects of distribution (access to warmth); recognition (the acknowledgement of different needs for different groups e.g. disabled people and older people having higher energy needs); and procedure (access to relevant information and representation in energy strategy-setting).

3.3.1 Disability as an issue of environmental justice

If disability is an issue of social justice, as argued in Chapter One, then it can also be conceptualised as an issue of environmental justice. The two issues can be interlinked, as shown in an initial attempt to map the literature regarding disability and environmental concerns undertaken by the researcher prior to this investigation (see Fenney and Snell, 2011). The rest of this section comprises a summary and further development of the findings of this article.

As a matter of distributive justice on a global scale, disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to be adversely affected by changes in, or damage to, the natural environment. This is, in large part, because disabled people are over-represented amongst those in poverty. People in poverty face greater risk of exposure to environmental damage from pollution and climate change (Kett, 2008; Polack, 2008). They also face exacerbation of existing health conditions in such circumstances (Page and Howard, 2010; Innes, 2009; Summers, 2008). This affects disabled people in both developed and developing nations. It has come under scrutiny since the Asian tsunami in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2006 (Wolbring, 2009; Hemingway and Priestley, 2006). Many disabled people died, not only due to these weather events, but also because of poorly planned and inaccessible or inappropriate relief. Additionally, Page and Howard (2010) note that provision for those with chronic conditions is often siphoned off to those with new acute needs following environmental disasters. Wolbring (2009) highlights that these services are often already inadequate before such events.

Disabled people facing poverty in the UK context also experience environmental injustices. Poverty leads to a lack of choice and control regarding personal pro-environmental behaviours. For example, the ability to recycle can be affected by many factors including housing situation and access to a vehicle (Adebowale et al., 2009; Burningham and Thrush, 2001). Choice and control regarding pro-environmental behaviour may also be limited for disabled people who live in residential care settings (Lovelock, 2010). Many disabled people experience barriers to accessing to green space and to participating in more general environmental activities. These may be physical barriers such as inaccessible transport options or information, or attitudinal barriers such as harassment from other individuals (Countryside Agency, 2005b). Access to green space is

foundational for disabled people's inclusion. Although not in itself 'pro-environmental', contact with nature fosters environmental knowledge and appreciation (DEFRA, 2008b). In the UK, DEFRA and the Countryside Agency have conducted research and issued strategy documents covering physical, social and attitudinal barriers to accessing green space (DEFRA 2008b; Countryside Agency, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). This issue has received the most UK policy attention to date – perhaps due to its natural progression from access to the built environment, an issue well-documented in disability studies. Green space also brings health benefits (Mind, 2007; Sensory Trust, 2006), to which disabled people may also face unequal access.

Procedural injustices may lead to the kinds of distributive injustices described here because disabled people are often excluded from participation in environmental decision making. This is despite debates around sustainability having a strong focus on participation, particularly at the international level. The literature on participation relating to environmental sustainability rarely takes account of disability, however, and vice versa. For example, no disability organisations featured among the registered observers at the UNFCCC gatherings (Polack, 2008), and Adebowale and Church (2009) highlighted the lack of attention to disability regarding DEFRA's research into population involvement with pro-environmental behaviours – although it should be noted that the DfT have begun to address this issue regarding transport behaviours (Thornton et al., 2011). Disabled people as a demographic – like minority ethnic groups, older people and young people – have been largely ignored by the environmental sector (Adebowale and Church, 2009; Adebowale et al., 2009). A related issue is the reproduction of unequal power relations in so-called participatory approaches, leading to failure or disempowerment (see for example Cooke and Kothari, 2000; Oliver, 1992). This is potentially negative for participation. Avoiding or mitigating these issues requires a high level of reflexivity, consideration of methods, and attention to unequal power relations between facilitators and participants.

This may also be an issue of misrecognition. In Chapter Two it was shown how sustainability-focused policies ignore the potential active contribution of disabled people by either ignoring disability or only considering it in relation to 'vulnerability' or victimhood. Similarly, ableist norms (ability expectations of the

implied citizen like being able to access public transport or green space) were identified in these policies. Therefore, it is unsurprising that disabled people have not been included in formal or informal environmental decision-making processes – the particular needs and potential contributions of disabled people have not been *recognised*, leading (in Fraser's definition) to exclusion from participation. Charles and Thomas (2007) argue that environmental justice struggles need to recognise disability issues. Although not grounded in theoretical concepts of recognition, their research captures a number of instances of misrecognition of the Deaf community in local authority environmental decision-making processes.

Reproduction of privilege may also be a factor in why disability is often missed in wider sustainability debates – for example, accessibility issues are often not considered by environmentalists – such as physical access to environmental activities (Adebowale et al., 2009). Some implications of unequal access for disabled people have already been noted with regard to the environmental citizenship literature. It is therefore clear from this brief summary that the potential implications of disabled people's exclusion are far-reaching.

3.3.2 Key ethical considerations

Environmental justice issues also reach to fundamental concerns, such as disabled people's right to life. The overpopulation debate is one example. Most extremist views about radical population reduction and control (such as Malthusian ideas, eugenics and mass sterilisation) have been consigned to history, but with regard to disability these notions have not been completely discarded (see for example Armer, 2007; Shakespeare, 1998). Therefore, debates around overpopulation still hold the potential for negative impacts on disabled people. Curry, for example, argues that 'a sustainable society would cease to be sustainable if its population continues to grow' (Curry, 2011, p.230). In a context where one reason for growth is that more babies born with impairments are surviving due to medical and technological advances (see for example Russell, 2003), statements like this require qualification. There are also links between those calling for 'steady state' economies (as opposed to economic growth, described in Chapter One) and calls for population reduction

(see for example Daly and Cobb, 1994). This is another problem of sustainability discussions which underemphasise social factors.

Attfeld (2003) addresses the concern of overpopulation, specifically in response to a provocative paper by (Roulston III, 2003). Roulston suggests that, in a context where society already allows inequality and human suffering, it is logical that nature should sometimes be prioritised over humanity. This is acceptable even where people might go hungry or lose their livelihoods because of it, and is relevant in terms of achieving a sustainable population: 'by just feeding people, without attention to the larger social results, we could be feeding a kind of cancer' (Roulston III, 2003, p.259). While Attfeld (2003) agrees the need for a 'sustainable population', he contends that this can be achieved without the need for discourses of quantifiable limits for populations, for example through voluntary policies that take development needs into account.

One of Attfeld's arguments has particular relevance for disabled people. If beyond specific limits human life is conceived as a threat or danger, then he suggests a logical conclusion might be drawn that the demise of some individuals is a moral virtue where numbers exceed this limit. This, alongside the idea of human beings as 'cancer', may lead to reduced motivation to save lives or treat injured or sick individuals. In his words, 'this discourse thus generates a reluctance to show solidarity with vulnerable humans' (Attfeld, 2003, p.469). He links this to potential development of racist or fascist ideas but ableist ideas could also arise. Similarly, arguments to punish those who have more than an allocated quota of children (Daly and Cobb, 1994) are at risk of increased ableist outcomes also.

The population argument resonates with Wolbring's (2009) discussion of 'adaptation apartheid', a term coined by Desmond Tutu (UNDP, 2007, p.166). Adaptation apartheid means that it is much easier for the rich to 'adapt' their lifestyles in response to climate change than for people experiencing poverty. The rich, however, do not share their adaptive capacity with the poor (UNDP, 2007). Wolbring (2009) suggests that the same principle can be seen between non-disabled and disabled people because of the inequalities that already exist between them. The greater the challenges of climate change, the more people will be expected to adapt, 'with the ones less affected being unwilling to accommodate the ones more affected beyond a certain point' (Wolbring, 2009,

no pagination). Issues like these are both a potential consequence and cause of disabled people's lower status in society which leads to their exclusion from debates around sustainability concerns.

3.3.3 Other impacts of environmental injustice

These kinds of environmental injustices are not only detrimental for disabled people, however. The argument made here and in the earlier article (Fenney and Snell, 2011) is that this situation is also potentially damaging for the environment. Where disabled people have not been considered, examples can be found of environmental initiatives *decreasing* access. For example cycle path creation can narrow pavements, making them harder for wheelchair users to navigate (Burningham and Thrush, 2001) and potentially increasing reliance on cars.

Disabled people may also be reliant on energy-intensive technologies such as ventilators or temperature control systems (Summers, 2008; Leipoldt, 2006); technologies that may not be a high priority for 'greening'. More energy efficient options may be unaffordable. Finally, carbon-reducing programmes in the UK are generally targeted at people with higher incomes and flexible energy needs who are more able to make reductions (Adebowale and Church, 2009). This means, however, that many disabled people on lower incomes are ignored, despite often having high energy usage due to impairment effects (George et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2004). As the disabled population increases, these environmental impacts are likely to grow.

Disability has now been outlined as a matter of environmental justice. Clear examples of distribution, participation and recognition injustices have been outlined. There are also some examples of disabled people's inclusion in environmental issues in this literature. This can have positive outcomes – for example the benefits of including disabled people's organisations in disaster planning (Hemingway and Priestley, 2006). Consultation and research with disabled people has also led to improved access to green spaces (Countryside Agency 2005a, 2005b). An environmental justice frame provides a strong justification for the aims of this research in relation to highlighting barriers faced and policy developments required.

3.3.4 Limitations of environmental justice

There are some limitations to the concept of environmental justice which should also be noted. As discussed earlier, environmental justice claims have been suggested as a better foundation for action towards environmental equity than environmental citizenship theories. This is because it does not rely on appeals to rational individuals to alter their behaviour (Agyeman and Evans, 2006).

While Dobson (2003) grounds his ecological citizenship in the notion of justice, he focuses on macro, distributional injustices. This misses those occurring at a more micro level – such as those between disabled and non-disabled people – or different aspects of justice such as participation and recognition.

Charles and Thomas (2007) use the specific issue of Deafness to argue that concepts of environmental justice need to be synthesised with those of political citizenship to explain disabled people's exclusion from environmental policymaking. A key reason for this is that much of the environmental justice literature does not distinguish between different experiences of disability (such as de Bruin et al., 2011). Environmental justice research often concentrates on the victims of environmental injustices (Middlemiss, 2010). Therefore further theorising is needed to address aims of highlighting the diversity of disabled people's experiences and views.

Walker and Burningham provide an exception; they do acknowledge that not all disabled people are equally 'vulnerable', and suggest that those affected by environmental injustices are not merely victims but 'citizens with rights to be asserted, achieved and protected' (Walker and Burningham, 2011, p.16). This, however, is another potential argument for considering issues of environmental citizenship and to whom it may apply. Similarly, Burningham and Thrush (2001) note that environmental justice's tendency to focus specifically on disadvantaged people in poor environments might miss the particular issues that arise where disadvantaged people live in better environments (often surrounded by more well-off households). Additionally, it may miss the differential responsibilities of rich individuals in the global south compared to the national-level rights and responsibilities of the places in which they live (Bulkeley et al., 2014). In a global context, disabled people in the UK are likely

to be agents of climate change as well as facing oppression themselves. A focus only on victims is likely to miss this aspect of identity. All of these experiences are little-investigated in the existing literature and merit further exploration.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the relevance of various theoretical concepts addressing sustainability and considered how a disability studies perspective might contribute to, or contest assumptions of, these theories. In research and theorising about pro-environmental behaviours, social practice approaches and environmental citizenship, disabled people are invisible and accessibility ignored. These literatures seem to focus on environmental sustainability at the expense of more social concerns and there is no consideration for disability equality. Environmental citizenship has also been critiqued elsewhere for missing the social aspect of sustainability (Agyeman and Evans, 2004). This presents a contrast to policy, which appears to be concentrated primarily on economic aspects of sustainability. Again the social is currently under-emphasised, however, leading to partial understandings of disability equality. The exception to this is the environmental justice literature, which has also engaged with disability to some degree, but often in terms of 'vulnerability' rather than agency. There is, however, potential for future work inclusive of disability equality in all these areas. This would also contribute to their environmental sustainability-focused aims because, as discussed above, disabled people's exclusion from environmental initiatives can have negative environmental consequences.

This chapter raises a number of questions which can only be addressed with empirical research – particularly around disabled people's lived experiences of environmental citizenship and the implications for justice and inclusion. It is clear, however, both from this chapter and the previous chapters, that there are as yet significant gaps in theorising. Now that existing theoretical, empirical and policy literatures have been explored, the empirical dimension of this thesis can be addressed. The next chapter discusses methodological considerations and practical methods undertaken as well as the rationale for analysing the data

generated. It also provides a description of the sample of participants and the chosen geographical context. It sets the scene for the second half of this thesis, which presents the research findings and attempts to address some of the questions raised.

4 Methodology

This chapter outlines key methodological considerations made in this research. As demonstrated in Chapter One there has been, to date, only a small amount of research conducted with disabled people to examine experiences and understandings of environmental issues and concerns, and so no secondary datasets were available or suitable to investigate this topic. Empirical qualitative research with participants who had direct personal experience of disability was therefore a central aim. This chapter discusses theoretical underpinnings of the study and the translation of these into operational research methods. These methods are described, along with a discussion of how sampling and access were both planned and encountered. Finally, methods of data analysis are examined. Recruitment was a significant challenge in this research, and particular issues faced will be reflected upon.

As a piece of disability research, it is relevant to position the researcher with respect to this project. It was planned and carried out by a researcher with direct personal experience of disability. This had relevance to the research because it directly influenced the initial idea for this PhD. As noted by Barnes (1992, p.121), however, 'having an impairment does not automatically give someone an affinity with disabled people'. Many other factors may also significantly mediate the experience of disability – for example, in this case, a relatively short period of personal experience. Therefore, while open about this personal experience if asked, it was not something spontaneously discussed or advertised regarding the research.

4.1 Theoretical underpinnings and research strategy

This research was based on a commitment to the empowerment of disabled people and an aim to contribute toward disabled people's full participation in society on an equal basis with non-disabled people. Oliver (1992) argues that

the 'gold standard' for disability research in this context is emancipatory research. This entails an attempt to change 'the social relations of research production' (Oliver, 1992, p.102) which have historically been exploitative of disabled people. It is grounded in a social model of disability, making explicit the ways in which unequal power relations are reproduced and how they disable (Barnes, 2008; Oliver, 1992) and fully involving disabled people 'in determining the aims, methods and uses of the research' (Zarb, 1997, p.52). In these ways the facilitation of a situation from which disabled people may empower themselves might be achieved (Oliver, 1992). It has also been acknowledged, however, that this is difficult to achieve in practice (Stone and Priestley, 1996; Zarb, 1992). Further, emancipatory research has faced critique for its central social model underpinning, which could paradoxically end up being experienced as oppressive (Danieli and Woodhams, 2005). This is because many disabled people do not use the idea of disability as a social oppression in relation to their own experiences – or even describe themselves as 'disabled', in some instances (Williams et al., 2008; Barnes and Mercer, 2004).

This project was planned outside the emancipatory paradigm but was influenced by its principles, such as paying attention to unequal power relations and their impact on disabled people. Therefore attempts were made to reduce unequal power relations between the researcher and participants, for example by sharing the researcher's own experiences of the topic when asked by participants. Related participatory aims were also important, such as a commitment to investigating and presenting participants' experiences 'from their own perspectives' (French and Swain, 1997, p.26). This meant that, in epistemological terms, talking with disabled people and inviting participants to describe their own experiences was important. Similarly, participants were considered to be 'expert knowers' (Barnes and Mercer, 1997, p.7), speaking as experts on their own experiences.

As well as using qualitative methods to generate rich descriptions of their personal experiences, participatory research seeks to involve disabled people at all stages of the research and commits the researcher to accountability to their participants. This prevents the imposition of social understandings of disability on participants – because this approach is not integral to participatory research, if participants prefer to use alternative understandings of disability

these can be incorporated into it (French and Swain, 1997). It can thus better incorporate a social relational understanding of disability and investigate internal and external effects of disability as well as how these are experienced by participants. To this end, participants were invited to review and approve their transcribed interviews. A number chose to edit parts of their transcriptions, indicating engagement with this process. During the fieldwork stage, some participants also made suggestions about the interview schedule which were incorporated into subsequent interviews. Participants were not, however, invited to take part in the initial planning stages or the analysis phase, and so only modest participatory goals were achieved in this research.

Participatory commitments fit well with an abductive research strategy (Beckett, 2006b). As a research strategy, abduction involves the synthesis of individual experiences into a 'new conceptual framework' (Danermark et al., 2002, p.80). Re-conceptualising a particular phenomenon, based on the application of a different theoretical perspective, can offer new explanations and better knowledge. Blaikie (2010) adds another dimension to this strategy by suggesting that this framework, while involving a necessary degree of abstraction, needs to remain close enough to the participants' own understandings that they can still identify their role within it. This is also necessary to avoid alienating participants from the research.

Abductive logic, on which this strategy is founded, is neither causal, like deduction, or neutral like induction – instead it operates as a form of probability and starts with a general conjecture, thus allowing more room for uncertainty (Danermark et al., 2002). This fits well with the research questions for this project. Although there was a general supposition that disabling barriers might be experienced in relation to environmental issues, there was little knowledge about the impact this might have on individuals' conceptions of citizenship. Similarly, it allows both 'what' and 'why' questions and 'incorporates... the meaning and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their everyday lives, and which direct their behaviour – and elevates them to the central place in social theory' (Blaikie, 2010, p.89). This again reinforces and complements aims of presenting participants' experiences from their own perspectives.

4.2 Methods

Guided by participatory principles, a key aim of the research was to talk with disabled people rather than just about them. Participants' experiences could then be presented 'from their own perspectives' (French and Swain, 1997, p.26). In addition, targeting a maximum-diverse range of experiences of disability was important to highlight diversity among disabled people. This aimed to avoid the danger of treating disability as an 'administrative category' (Charles and Thomas, 2007, p.211); that is, to use it to obscure complexity, rather than analytically to incorporate different understandings and experiences.

The research questions set out in the Introduction address different aspects of this thesis. Question Two, 'How do disabled people experience environmental issues in everyday life?' (and its sub-questions) were addressed through the empirical research, using qualitative interviews and focus groups. Question One, 'How have concepts of disability equality and sustainability been constructed in different discourses and at different levels of policy?' was primarily addressed through the discussion of concepts in Chapter One and the review of policy in Chapter Two. Question Three, following on from this to discuss the contribution of policy, was addressed with reference to Chapter Two and the empirical findings. Question Four, finally, positioned the theoretical work in Chapter Three against the findings from the empirical research to consider implications for academic theorising.

A defining feature of qualitative research is that methods are chosen according to the phenomenon being studied, rather than an arbitrary method being applied to a situation (Flick, 2006). Gaskell and Bauer (2000) suggest that this in itself can be a measure of validity in qualitative research. Because the aim was to recruit a diverse range of participants and have a range of different question types, it was logical to incorporate a range of methods. The empirical research had the benefit of being piloted for a preceding Masters dissertation. This pilot considered the use of visual methods as well as qualitative interviewing, and interviewed disabled people who reported actively engaging in pro-environmental behaviours. A number of practical issues with visual methods arose, however, such as the additional burden to participants of asking them to take photographs and the inaccessibility to individuals with visual impairments.

Visual methods were therefore not brought forward to the PhD research, while focus groups were added as a way to engage participants who might have less interest and knowledge around environmental issues. Focus groups and semi-structured qualitative interviews were therefore the primary methods of data generation for this research.

4.2.1 Interviews and focus groups

The aim was for pragmatism rather than methodological purity (Seale, 1999) so – while attempting to remain theoretically and logically consistent (Mason, 2002) – methods were overlapped rather than applying one particular method in its entirety. Both qualitative interviewing and focus groups have features that may reduce unequal power relations between researcher and participant. Qualitative interviewing allows flexibility for clarification of meaning and detailed exploration of issues arising during the interview, and so reduces the danger that the researcher might ‘distort, constrain or ‘impose violence’ on the respondents’ statements’ (Barnes, 1992, p.120). Meanwhile, focus group methods can provide a potentially less intimidating setting than a one-to-one interview (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan and Kreuger, 1993). Gaskell suggests that focus groups are useful for investigating ‘issues of public interest or common concern’ (Gaskell, 2000, p.48) which fits the topic of sustainability. Focus groups can generate useful data about shared experiences between participants. In this research they focused on questions about participants’ commonality as people who experience disability, people who are residents of the same city, or people who were recruited via an environmental organisation and so might be assumed to have a shared concern for environmental issues. Individual interviews focused more on individual interpretations, diverse experiences, and framing of issues of environmental responsibility.

Semi-structured interviews are an established method for generating the rich, in-depth data this research sought to produce (Kvale, 2006; Mason, 2002). They are a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984, p.102) or a ‘professional conversation’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.2) between a researcher and a participant. Data generated can be regarded as either excavated – that is, ‘pre-existing’ data that can be uncovered from an external

reality – or constructed, produced in the shared interactions of the participant and researcher, just one of many potential realities (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Mason, 2002). This is a simplified description of nuanced ontological and epistemological debates, but this research utilised a perspective in-between these two poles. Interview participants were understood as agents with capability for reflexivity regarding their personal experiences and interpretations of these, which may in turn be influenced by external, structural factors beyond their awareness or control (Egbo, 2000). Therefore, they had the potential to consciously examine pre-existing experiences and ideas that they brought to the interview situation, and alter these in response to it. Accounts were therefore neither entirely produced nor completely discoverable (Bhaskar, 1989). Thus, interviews aimed to construct a shared knowledge as the researcher explored how the participant experienced and interpreted his or her world (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), while simultaneously using that interpretive capacity to investigate pertinent structural influences.

Focus groups, although sharing similarities with individual interviews (Gaskell, 2000; Morgan, 1997), provide a broader scope for exploring and comparing experiences within a group context. Other group members can challenge another individual's point of view in a way that would not be appropriate in an individual interview setting, and facilitate in clarifying interpretations for other group members (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups have the advantage that when a topic has not been much considered previously by participants, the group interactions can stimulate ideas and perspectives that might be much harder to obtain from individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups may also challenge traditional unequal power relations between interviewers and participants (Kvale, 2006). Participants outnumber the interviewer, and this can alter the power dynamics and hand participants much more autonomy to determine the group's focus and priorities (Kitzinger, 1995). Talking about and construct shared understandings on a topic also creates potential for them to be able to generate solutions and practical ideas, which could be an empowering experience (Kitzinger, 1995).

Choosing between a focus group, individual interview, or using both, largely depended on the characteristics of the participants involved and how they were recruited. It is often advantageous to conduct a focus group with a pre-existing

group (Kitzinger, 1995) and in situations where participants were recruited from a group, it was judged to be less intimidating to interview them with the people they already knew present. Following up the focus groups with individual interviews can broaden the scope of the data and increase the level of detail in individual participants' accounts (Morgan, 1997). Individual interviews may also provide less articulate participants with space to express their own perspective. In this research, only one focus group led to a follow-up interview, but this interview was invaluable in giving further insight into that participant's experiences.

The communication style (and/or impairment) of participants also sometimes meant individual interviewing was more appropriate (Gibbs, 1997). This was the case for a participant with a hearing impairment who relied partly on lip-reading. While the literature notes that conversely participants may be able to translate for each other (Kitzinger, 1995), this did not occur in the research presented here. Participants who are housebound or have difficulty travelling may also prefer an individual interview (Crabtree et al., 1993) and this was the case for a number of the participants in this research.

4.2.2 Telephone interviews

At a later stage in the research process, it was considered useful to attempt to recruit key informants from other areas of the UK. This was an attempt to begin, tentatively, to triangulate the research findings and compare the experiences in Leeds with other areas. For this part of the research, telephone interviews were used, largely due to time constraints.

Much academic consideration of the utility of telephone interviewing focuses on structured, usually quantitative, research. Where qualitative interviewing is considered, telephone interviews are often considered to be less effective than in-person interviewing (Novick, 2008). Some researchers, however, have found little difference in data quality between telephone and in-person interviewing (Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Novick, 2008). In this research, as recommended for telephone interviewing (Novick, 2008), participants were contacted via email prior to the interview, with consent forms and information sheets sent over to be read ahead of time. This was the same for many of the in-person interviews.

Participants returned signed consent forms by post or email. The time and date of the telephone interview was agreed in a similar way to arranging a face-to-face meeting, and at the start of the call the comfort of the participant was ascertained (e.g. checking they had refreshments available). Practicalities were discussed (such as who would call whom back if the call was cut off, and ensuring participants knew they could take a break if needed). Then the research information was re-capped, allowing the opportunity for any questions, and consent re-confirmed. Interviews then followed the same format as the in-person interviews, described below.

Each of the telephone interviews lasted around one hour in length. Potential issues associated with telephone interviewing – such as increased potential for distraction and a shorter interview length (Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Novick, 2008) – were not experienced, although not enough were conducted to generalise from. Like the research reported by Novick (2008) and Trier-Bieniek (2012), few or no differences between the quality and type of data were noticed between telephone and in-person interviews. It is also relevant that the lack of visual cues was cited as a key disadvantage of telephone interviewing (Novick, 2008). Given that one of the telephone interview participants had a visual impairment, this aspect of in-person interviewing would not necessarily have been available regardless. Incidentally, this highlights that social research methods are not free of ability expectations themselves in terms of assuming interviewers/interviewees to be non-disabled (Wheeler, 2004).

4.2.3 Interview schedule

The interview schedule divided the interview into three sections. The first began with questions about participants' understandings of the environment and their particular interests and concerns. It was intended as a gentle introduction to the issues and a chance to situate the topic. The second part of the interview focused on the participant's particular experiences with different pro-environmental behaviours, and the third section returned to a more general discussion asking about issues of rights and responsibilities.

These sections directly relate to the sub-questions in Research Question 1 (with the exception of questions about diversity of experiences, which is more relevant to considering the spread of answers across all participants):

- Section 1
 - What understandings do disabled people have of environmental concerns?
- Section 2
 - What, if any, barriers are faced in relation to sustainable lifestyles and which of these are related to disability?
 - What tensions, if any, are identified between aims of sustainability and accessibility?
 - What ideas do disabled people have about how to contribute to a more sustainable way of life?
- Section 3
 - What ideas do disabled people construct about allocation of responsibility for the environment and how diverse are these?

Unlike sections 1 and 3, the middle section included the use of specific prompts (either presented as flash cards or read out and repeated as necessary). The intention was to allow participants to choose areas of most relevance to themselves, while also meaning they did not have to rely solely on memory across a large potential range of relevant issues. Prompts were developed using the DEFRA Sustainable Lifestyles Framework (DEFRA, 2011d, Appendix A) and examples are included in Appendix B. This framework was based on significant amounts of research into pro-environmental behaviours in the UK and was also chosen because it represented the types of issues currently being addressed in sustainability-focused policies (DEFRA, 2008a). The prompts generalised from the framework; 'Using energy and water wisely', for example, became two prompts – 'energy' and 'water' – removing the moral wording. This encouraged participants to discuss ways they used energy and water more generally, whether sustainably or otherwise. Participants were asked to choose two or three prompts to talk about in depth, although some chose to discuss each area on the list. Questions were then asked to investigate the participant's experiences with the topics they had picked, in particular around barriers and

access. The prompts also contained an 'other' option, and participants were asked if they wanted to talk about anything that was not on the prompts.

Individual interview participants were additionally asked to answer seven demographic monitoring questions, presented as a questionnaire (or read out if the participant preferred). It was stressed that this was optional, but the majority of participants were happy to answer the majority of the questions. The questionnaire can be seen in Appendix C.

4.2.4 Methods in practice

In total, 20 individual interviews, three focus groups, and three key informant interviews were carried out with a total of 39 participants between January and November 2013. The individual interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to over two hours, although the majority were around 60-90 minutes in length. This reflected differing interest, energy levels and availability of the participants (and occasionally the availability of the interview venue). The key informant interviews each lasted around one hour in length. The focus groups were less successful, with two lasting only around 30 minutes and one lasting approximately an hour. The issues encountered with the focus groups in this research are discussed further on.

Individual interviews were held in a variety of locations – university meeting rooms, cafes, organisation premises, and participants' homes. While formal meeting rooms were preferable to the researcher in terms of privacy and recording quality, participants were given freedom to choose their preferred location as it was recognised that a university setting might be off-putting and that participants might face access issues travelling there. Public spaces (cafes and organisation premises) were therefore the next preferred option, with visits to private housing only where no other mutually convenient option existed and/or for participants who faced significant access issues in terms of leaving their homes. For the individual interviews, the general format (after settling the participant/researcher in, depending on location, ascertaining the length of time available for the interview and making sure refreshments were on hand) was an introduction to the research, followed by an opportunity to ask questions, before confirming consent. In the majority of cases participants had had the opportunity

to read information about the research and see consent forms in advance of the interview. All the interviews apart from one were digitally recorded; for the one that was not recorded detailed notes were taken.

After interviews had taken place, recordings were transcribed, anonymised and sent to participants for review. The majority of participants positively re-affirmed their consent for that transcript to be used in the subsequent data analysis; a number made alterations or additions and returned an amended transcript. A few participants also sent additional documents that they felt might be helpful (for example further information about projects they were involved in or relevant reports they had read).

The focus group schedule was broadly similar to the interview schedule in that there were three sections covering understandings, activities and considerations of rights and responsibility, but questions were tailored to the group or their organisation, and physical prompt cards were not used when considering activities – instead the groups made a list. However, because of the short duration of the focus groups, the three topics could not be addressed in every case (or not addressed in significant depth). In addition, for two of the focus groups the majority of the participants did not have much experience of pro-environmental behaviours, and focused more on their experiences with their immediate (built) environments. Although not intended as the focus of this research initially, experiences with the built environment therefore became an important consideration alongside other access issues directly related to sustainable lifestyles. This will be further discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.2.1.1).

4.3 Ethics

Broad ethical issues – such as participatory research and power relations between researcher and participants – have already been discussed.

Additionally, as a piece of empirical research with human participants, this project required approval from a University Ethics Committee before fieldwork was authorised. Regarding practical ethical issues, ESRC research guidelines

were utilised to ensure best practice. The ESRC (2010) highlight six key principles: quality, informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, avoidance of harm and independence.

With regard to the principle of quality (which also mentions integrity and transparency), key aspects of this are addressed by the clear description of the research methods and analysis in this thesis, enabling readers to make their own judgements of the quality of the work. In terms of informed consent, as detailed above, participants were sent information about the research ahead of time wherever possible. Additionally, research information was always recapped – with the opportunity to ask questions – before any interview or focus group began. Participants either signed printed consent forms or gave verbal, recorded consent alongside the form being read out to them. Consent forms and information sheets were available in large print, 12pt and Easy Read; examples of the latter two documents are included in Appendices D-G. Participants' interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, but transcriptions were anonymised and data stored only on secure university servers to ensure confidentiality. Participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time up until an agreed date (when the writing up of this thesis began).

Potential harm was assessed before the research began with regard to wasting participants' time and/or possible emotional distress if a negative experience was raised during interviews/focus groups. With regard to the first issue, although there is no easy solution, fully informed consent and honesty about the nature of PhD research minimised this risk, and participants were offered a £5 shopping voucher as a 'thank you' at the end of the interviews and focus groups as a small recognition of their contribution to the research. With regard to the second risk, the researcher gathered information about local sources of help and support to offer, so that in the event of a distressed participant appropriate support might be accessed. This situation did not arise in practice, however. Finally, the independence of this research was safeguarded because funding was not dependent on a particular outcome. That the research sided with a particular political perspective on disability was made transparent by including it in the information sheet and discussion about the research.

4.4 Sampling and access

As a qualitative piece of research, the sampling strategy was necessarily purposive (Coyne, 1997). A maximum variation approach was also taken to sampling (Patton, 2002) aiming to target a diverse range of participants. This was also an attempt to avoid the disadvantages of an exclusively 'snowballed' sample. This method was used in the pilot study and successfully recruited only participants who shared many of the researcher's demographic characteristics and life experiences. The initial sampling criteria chosen were based on findings or gaps in previous research and on theoretical interest. While there were many possibly relevant characteristics, based on the wealth of quantitative research that has been undertaken into issues of environmental concern and behaviour, within the scope of this project it was necessary to limit criteria to those most relevant to the research questions. This is not to say suggest that other factors were unimportant; they may well be of interest for further research. As with all good qualitative research, this project aimed to remain flexible and take an iterative and fluid approach in response to unexpected issues and data that arose (Mason, 2002).

As the research was about disabled people's experiences, the main criterion for sampling was that participants had direct personal experience of disability. As most measures of disability are based on individualised or medical criteria this was a self-selective category (Blaikie, 2010). Anyone who identified as 'disabled or as having long-term physical or mental health condition' was invited to respond. This broadly fits with the approach advised by the Disability Rights Commission (2007). Because the diversity of experiences of disability was emphasised by this research, it seemed logical to attempt to recruit individuals with different impairments. This was also the case because there are a wide range of ways to engage with sustainable lifestyles and thus many different access issues. Because of the diversity of impairments, however, specific groups were chosen with the aim of covering a broad, if not exhaustive, range of impairment types that individuals may have. These were:

- People with mobility impairments
- People with sensory impairments

- People with learning difficulties/disabilities
- People with long-term illnesses (physical or mental health conditions)

Many disabled people identify with more than one of these groupings (DWP, 2013). This was reflected in this research, with the majority of interview participants (13 out of 20) identifying two or more impairments (demographic monitoring was not carried out with focus group participants). For the focus groups, different disability organisations and environmental groups were targeted. Three focus groups were successfully carried out: two with participants from an organisation for those with physical and/or sensory impairments; and one with participants from a conservation group for individuals with learning difficulties and/or mental health conditions.

The majority of individual interview participants described their impairment as related to mobility or 'long term physical health condition' (see Table 1 below). One participant also used the 'other' category to identify a brain injury.

<i>Mobility impairment</i>	13
<i>Sensory impairment</i>	5
<i>Learning difficulty or disability</i>	1
<i>Long-term physical health condition</i>	12
<i>Long-term mental health condition</i>	9
<i>Other (please state)</i>	1

Table 1: Impairment types recorded by participants

Five were born with (at least one of) their impairments or acquired in childhood. Although there was an over-representation of those with mobility impairments and an under-representation of those with learning difficulties and sensory impairments, diversity with respect to impairment type was considered relatively successful given the issues faced regarding accessing participants (discussed below).

The second sampling criterion was local authority context. The decision was made to limit the sample to one local authority area, which would also enable

transport, fire and police services). It is also the centre of the Leeds City Region – an entity developed to coordinate economic strategy across Leeds and surrounding areas in West and parts of North and South Yorkshire. Among participants successfully recruited, the majority lived within the Leeds outer ring road area (see Figure 1). Interview participants were spread across 14 of the 29 Leeds area postcodes, while the focus groups were held in south and west Leeds respectively. It was considered a reasonably diverse sample in this respect.

Other participant characteristics were also taken into consideration. These were:

- i. Levels of environmental concern and engagement

It was originally hoped to sample a range of environmental concerns and engagement. Participants' concern and engagement with pro-environmental activities were important because concern for the environment is a commonly-cited factor in individuals' engagement (Olli et al., 2001). A key premise of this research was that disabled people may face specific barriers with regard to engagement. Therefore environmental groups and disability groups were both used as sources of participants, with the supposition that concerned and engaged participants might be found in the former, and more diversity of opinion in the latter. Another reason to sample for both concern and engagement was that it is possible for individuals to engage with a number of pro-environmental behaviours without having specific motives of concern for the environment (Burningham and Thrush, 2001). An example of this would be reducing energy expenditure to save money – which has a side effect of positive environmental impact. Concern and engagement are difficult to define, however. A quantitative measure could potentially have been used but was considered to add too much of an additional burden to participants, as well as the issue that those available are subject to various critiques – for example the New Environmental/Ecological Paradigm Scale (Catton and Dunlap, 1980; Dunlap et al., 2000) – see Hawcroft and Milfont (2010) or Amburgey and Thoman (2011) for critiques. It was also difficult because of the nature of the study to recruit individuals who had low levels of environmental concern. However, it was possible to consider participants' expressed levels of concern and engagement in relation to each

other. Some diversity was achieved, particularly with regard to the focus groups (mentioned above).

ii. Socio-economic status

This was identified as an important issue because previous research has focused specifically on the experiences of disabled people in lower socio-economic groups (see for example Burningham and Thrush, 2001). Also, socio-economic disadvantage is often highlighted as relevant to environmental concern because individuals experiencing deprivation may not have the time or energy to spare for issues outside of their day-to-day existence. Therefore they may focus only on environmental concerns that directly impact upon them (Clarke and Agyeman, 2011; Macnaghten et al., 1995). An accurate measure of socio-economic status is difficult to achieve, however, but various clues can be drawn from aspects such as employment status (or the employment status of their household), housing status and reliance on welfare, for example.

For the purposes of this research, participants were asked about employment status in the demographic monitoring questionnaire. Additionally, some participants were recruited specifically from employee disability groups of local organisations as well as from more general disability organisations. The majority of individual interview participants also discussed their financial circumstances within their interviews. From these various sources, it was possible to at least broadly gauge that, while a few participants were relatively well off, the majority described themselves as on low incomes and/or reliant on welfare benefits. Eight participants were in paid work at the time of the research, and four were in education (only one full-time). Nine described themselves as volunteering, four as 'long term sick or disabled', five as 'looking after home or family'. One person described themselves as 'looking for paid work', one as retired, and two as retired due to ill health. (These were overlapping categories so more than one could be picked.) Therefore, while there was diversity in the sample, there were also parallels with the general picture of disabled people's employment and financial circumstances in the UK (DWP, 2013).

iii. Other Characteristics

Roughly equal numbers of men and women took part in the individual interviews (nine men and eleven women). Interview participants were also asked to describe their ethnicity. The majority (except three) identified as white or white British or English, with two refusals. There was an under-representation of disabled people from BME backgrounds among participants, despite attempts to recruit from this demographic (e.g. by specifically contacting organisations for disabled people from BME backgrounds). Similarly, there was not a large amount of diversity in age. Ages were asked in five brackets, with the vast majority aged 35-49 (see Table 2 below).

<i>18 – 24</i>	1
<i>25 – 34</i>	1
<i>35 – 49</i>	12
<i>50 – 64</i>	5
<i>65 and over</i>	1

Table 2: Participant age ranges

Finally, nine participants lived alone and eight lived with a partner or other family members. One participant lived in shared university accommodation, and one participant lived in what he described as a ‘single person flat within an 18 resident care home’.

Because this was a relatively under-explored area of research, elements of theoretical sampling informed it (Coyne, 1997). This is not to imply that a true grounded theory approach was being utilised, because the variables chosen above were those that were suspected – but not known – to be relevant based on available theory and previous research. As fieldwork progressed, attempts were made to sample specifically for certain under-represented criteria (participants from BME backgrounds, participants with sensory impairments, and participants with learning difficulties). Only participants with sensory impairments were successfully recruited because of this additional targeting.

With regard to access, in the first instance disabled people’s organisations and environmental organisations were contacted with the aim of negotiating access to their members. Meeting members in person to explain the research at local

meetings of these organisations was the ideal and was successfully achieved at three organisations (two disability groups and one environmental group).

Adverts were also circulated via organisation newsletters, emails and websites.

An element of snowballing was also employed with participants who were successfully recruited via these means to gain other potential contacts.

Leeds City Council sustainability-focused policy and strategy documents were collected via searches of the Council website. Similar to the identification process in Chapter Two, documents were selected for their relevance to citizens' everyday lives. A provisional list was drawn up and then confirmed with a council officer in the Environment team who was able to advise on any areas missed. A similar process was undertaken for disability-focused policies and strategies. A list of these is included in Appendix I.

4.4.1 Problems with access

A number of access issues specific to researching disability were experienced. For example, while visiting one organisation (which focused on mental health) to talk about this research, a member present and her support worker approached the researcher to express concern with what they perceived as being labelled disabled when the individual concerned did not identify as disabled. This is a relevant issue because not all people with mental health conditions consider themselves to be disabled (see for example Beresford et al., 2010). Another difficulty was negotiating the ongoing health conditions experienced by some participants. This meant that arranged meetings sometimes had to be cancelled (with some potential participants having to withdraw because of increasing ill health). One potential participant also died prior to interview. These issues occurred on top of more usual reasons that potential participants were not successfully interviewed (for example an unexpected bereavement, or researcher ill health).

Specific access difficulties occurred with the focus groups also. These mostly centred around negotiations with gatekeepers and the two focus groups that were short in length were due to miscommunications/misunderstandings with gatekeepers (for example one recruiting participants based on a 30 minute commitment, and another a misunderstanding on both sides regarding the

amount of time needed to adequately ensure consent). Both of these were to some extent due to being a novice researcher and highlight the need for clear communication with gatekeepers. In the third focus group, while these issues were dealt with successfully, a different issue arose. The non-disabled group facilitator dominated the discussion with her own experiences and comments, despite repeated attempts from the researcher to focus on responses from group participants.

The research had been explained to the facilitator beforehand and she had been present during the introduction of the research, so it is not clear why she decided to take an active part in the conversation. Unfortunately, however, her interruptions and comments meant the participants' discussion was somewhat stifled. Focus groups are often more difficult to arrange than individual interviews in terms of arranging practicalities, and no others were successfully set up during the fieldwork period. Interesting data was still generated even from these brief/stifled group discussions, however, and complements the significantly more substantial data generated from the 20 individual interviews also.

Another possible factor in the difference between the focus groups and individual interviews was the greater opportunity for informal contact with participants before the research encounter with the individual interviews. The researcher's own experience of disability and relation to the research often arose during these informal discussions, and the interview context allowed for a more interpersonal style which may have enabled participants to feel more at ease than the focus group situations.

Time was the biggest constraint when attempting to recruit key informants from further afield in the latter stages of fieldwork, but the data generated from the three key informant interviews successfully carried out also complements the case study data and hints that it might be fruitfully extended in future research.

4.5 Data analysis

There were four sources of data to analyse:

- individual interview transcripts
- focus group transcripts
- key informant interview transcripts
- local authority policy and strategy documents.

This meant three different types of data to analyse. While the same process was used to analyse focus group and interview data, the two data types were dealt with separately. As (Bloor et al., 2001) have noted, there are a number of ways focus group data differs from interview data. For example, it may contain unfinished speech and ideas – where overlapping topics are introduced by different group members – and ideas may be raised by one member but developed by others. This means that focus group data provides an insight into the dynamics and levels of (dis)agreement between members of the group, as opposed to an individual's personal beliefs and interpretations. Where overlaps appeared in data from individual interviews and focus groups, these are made explicit in the empirical chapters. As described above, each interview or group was recorded via digital voice recorder and then transcribed verbatim, with the different speakers identified by numbers. Specific references to names and places were replaced with more general descriptions to maintain anonymity.

The approach to the data, in keeping with the overall research strategy, was kept as open as possible. It was acknowledged, however, that assumptions are necessarily being brought to the analysis by the researcher's personal philosophical and political standpoints. Reflexivity was crucial to acknowledge these perspectives and how they might have influenced interpretations of participants' accounts (Mason, 2002; Lather, 1986). Overall, a qualitative thematic analysis was undertaken, involving a combination of ad-hoc and post-hoc approaches to the data. Data was organised and coded in NVivo. Initially transcripts were read for their relevance to the interview questions; a second reading, following a more 'line-by-line' approach, coded points of interest that arose from the data itself. This minimised the risk of only focusing on issues that appear relevant to the researcher's own interests. The initial focus was on individual transcripts, following Flick's (2006) approach to thematic coding which enabled a deeper analysis of individual participants' interactions. After this, codes were grouped and categories developed. These were cross-referenced

between participants, and data added from the other transcripts where relevant (Gibbs, 2007).

Focus groups and key informant interviews were similarly analysed, although without the use of NVivo as there was less data than in the individual interviews. Sustainability-focused policy and strategy documents were also considered first by using text searches to highlight any parts specifically addressing disability (using search terms such as *disab**, *frail*, *ill**, *vulnerab**). They were then read through for emerging themes. Disability-focused policy and strategy documents were searched for terms such as *'sustainab*'* and then similarly read through.

In keeping with the research commitment to non-exploitative research, participants' experiences and interpretations are presented as fully and descriptively as possible in the following analysis. Direct quotations are used extensively to allow the reader to verify interpretations of the data. In these, *'...'* represents the removal of less significant speech, for example repetition or fillers, while *'[...]'* represents the removal of longer content. Existing theories relevant to these findings are also noted. This is in keeping with the participatory and abductive aspects of this research, remaining close to the data and being careful not to abstract it so far that participants no longer recognise themselves in the analysis (Blaikie, 2010). Further analysis considering the data in the light of theoretical concepts presented in Chapter One – such as understandings of disability or ableism – is also presented. This attempts to shed light on different aspects of participants' experiences which were not explicitly discussed by them.

There are arguments that any analysis of participants' data in which they are not fully involved can alienate them and be potentially disempowering (see Goodley, 2000). It is also argued, however, that no one is able to give a completely accurate account of the world (Houston, 2001) and without some level of analysis important themes may be missed or the data could be misinterpreted by readers. Similarly, considering participants to be expert knowers and considering their experiences to be the best source of data about disabling barriers 'does not negate the fact that those barriers might exist outside their experience' (Priestley, 1998, p.85). Further analysis therefore does not devalue the participants' accounts, but rather presents them in a wider context (Goodley, 2000; Bhaskar, 1989). This more theoretically-grounded view

of the data can then be compared with existing theories (such as those discussed in the literature review) to generate tentative explanations of the phenomena that are occurring, another 'abductive' element of the research (Danermark et al., 2002).

4.5.1 A social practice analysis

Chapters Five and Six employ categories from Defra's Sustainable Lifestyles framework, and thus – although concentrating on external rather than internal barriers – take a broadly pro-environmental behaviours approach. Chapter Seven, however, utilises a social practice approach. As described in the Chapter Three (section 3.1), this approach critiques the economic and psychological paradigms that have dominated debates around environmental sustainability and the role of the individual over the past few decades. Social practice theories focus on particular practices – or routine ways of doing – and how they are carried out. They consider the structural and social contexts which construct the practice, rather than the individual or the structural context alone (Evans, 2011a; Shove, 2003). As is often noted, there is no unified 'practice theory' or approach (Shove and Spurling, 2013; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001), although Schatzki suggests that there are a few basic aspects that can usually be agreed on by those employing practice approaches.

First, practices are broadly defined as 'arrays of activity' (Schatzki, 2001, p.2), and secondly, 'activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artefacts, hybrids and natural objects' – that is, practices require a 'practitioner' of some sort. Additionally, other factors e.g. physical objects (manmade and natural), the relations between those objects (and between objects and practitioners), and external structures will also shape practices. Epistemologically, all practice approaches will also have 'practices' as a unit of analysis. Both Schatzki (2001) and Reckwitz (2002) provide good reviews of the ontological differences between various approaches and these will not be reproduced here. Warde notes, however, that much theoretical practice theory does not directly translate to empirical study because it is overly 'idealised [and] abstract' (Warde, 2005, p.135). Shove's approach, by contrast, is more closely situated with empirical rather than philosophical accounts of practice theory. As

noted earlier, her work has also directly attempted to influence UK policy agendas, and for both these reasons her approach is the focus of this analysis.

Shove and others (Shove et al., 2012; Reckwitz, 2002) conceptualise practices as 'defined by interdependent relations between materials, competences and meanings' (Shove et al., 2012, p.24). 'Materials' covers physical and design aspects of practices, the physical objects or resources implicated in the practice, while 'competences' is about the skills and knowledge – 'know-how' – involved in successfully engaging in a practice. 'Meanings', finally, encompasses 'the social and symbolic significance of participation' (Shove et al., 2012, p.23). This approach to social practices, by specifically incorporating materiality as an element of practice, parts from Schatzki's (2001) approach because it allows an aspect of agency to non-human artefacts – materials can be constitutive of society. Shove's account of materiality, however, fits well with describing disabling barriers embedded in particular practices, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. Shove and colleagues (2012) set out what they describe as a 'slimline' description of a practice approach in their book, and present a diagram (Figure 2) of how the elements of practice they identify combine to create a practice and how it can also be disrupted.

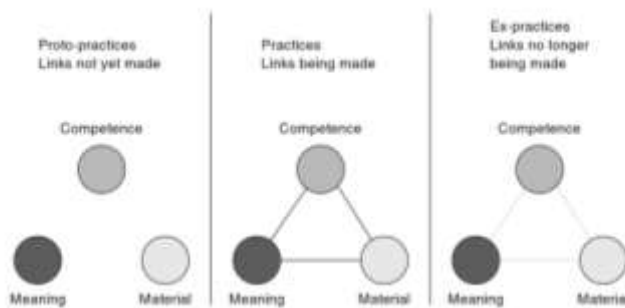


Figure 2: Elements of practice
(taken from Shove et al., 2012, p.25)

Individuals, in this understanding of social practice, are considered to be 'carriers or hosts of a practice' (Shove et al., 2012, p.6). Practices themselves may exist as either an entity or a performance. Practice-as-entity refers to the way that practices can be described through a particular assemblage of elements. Practice-as-performance refers to how practices-as-entity are produced and reproduced. It is this latter conception which allows the possibility of change over time as in the diagram above, as well as an understanding of

the 'dynamic relation between the status of participants and the meaning of the practices they carry' (Shove et al., 2012, p.54). This is how carriers of practice construct their social positions through particular practices. Practices also feature in different formations; they are often interconnected with other practices. Where practices co-exist they can be referred to as bundles, whereas co-depending practices are described as complexes. 'Black box' practices are those constituted by a number of other practices that by themselves would be of limited use – driving, with constitutive practices such as signalling, braking, and so on, is an example of this. By contrast, looser relations between practices – those that are connected but still separate – may be referred to as lifestyles or habitus (Shove et al., 2012).

This provides a useful way to examine the relevance of disabling barriers to practices (which, to date, has been little-mentioned in the sustainability-focused practice literature). Physical access issues are likely to be relevant regarding materials of practice – and potentially competences also – where these have not been considered from an accessibility perspective. Social barriers may well be implicated in 'meanings'. This may occur where certain practices either ignore disabled participants or even are actively discriminatory, such as by situating disability outside of a practice or as disqualified from it. Barriers arising from any of the three elements of practice, however, could disrupt a disabled person's participation in that practice, at least in its 'normalised' form. Equally practices successfully participated in by a disabled person might appear different to those of a non-disabled participant – for example requiring a different set of competences, materials and meanings which are more accessible. Warde (2005) notes that there are multiple ways of engaging with a practice, and differentiations within practices e.g. between people of different genders or social class backgrounds. This thesis will consider how this applies to disability status also.

The significant contribution of a social practice approach for this research is that it provides a way to consider transitions towards a more sustainable society beyond a focus on individual behaviours. By considering how practices change – such as how the links between different elements are made and remade – potential strategies for influencing change can be revealed. A practice approach towards influencing policy takes into account the different elements involved in

a practice and acknowledges the complexity of change. This avoids oversimplifying the issue, and the associated risks of unanticipated or unintended results. The social practice analysis chapter therefore explores the contributions of this approach for disability-focused and sustainability-focused initiatives, as well as considering how the research findings might critique current applications of this social practice approach.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methods employed in the empirical part of this thesis and the methods of analysis undertaken. The second half of the thesis presents the results of this empirical work. First, the practical aspects of participants' experiences will be described in relation to the Sustainable Lifestyles framework that was used in the interviews. The barriers faced to different pro-environmental behaviours are grouped into broad barrier types. These will be explored first in terms of common experiences and later regarding diversity among participants.

It is possible to consider the implications of different sustainability discourses in theory and policy by exploring the lived experiences of disabled people in a specific policy context. This highlights issues that are not currently being addressed in the theoretical debates such as how disabled people negotiate contexts – such as the environmental movement or sustainability policy context – which under-emphasise social factors such as disability equality. Concepts of environmental citizenship and environmental justice, and participants' reflections on their experiences will be picked up in later chapters. First, however, experiences of sustainable lifestyles are described.

5 Sustainable Lifestyles and Encounters with Physical and Organisational Barriers

This chapter explores the pro-environmental behaviours participants described in the interviews and focus groups, focusing on those which participants either enacted or reported facing barriers to. These findings reveal a far broader and more complex engagement with sustainable lifestyles than has been demonstrated by previous research with disabled people. Pro-environmental behaviours undertaken by participants are described first and compared with those set out by DEFRA as integral to sustainable lifestyles. As noted earlier in the thesis, pro-environmental behaviours can be constitutive of sustainable lifestyles, while accessibility is a key element of disability equality. Key physical and organisational barriers are explored and, where relevant, the accessible solutions participants had found are described.

5.1 Pro-environmental behaviours

A diverse range of pro-environmental behaviours were described by different participants. To a significant extent these were similar to those highlighted as key behaviours in DEFRA's (2011d) Sustainable Lifestyles Framework, reflecting the fact that this was used to guide the structure of interview questions relating to pro-environmental behaviours. There were, however, notable differences also. These are highlighted in the adapted Framework (Figure 3). Those in the framework but not mentioned by participants are crossed through, and those additional to the list are added along the left-hand side (the original framework can be seen in Appendix A). Some of the differences, for example detail around different product types, may be due to not discussing ethical food choices in such depth during interviews. Another reason for differences may be because DEFRA's framework was based on behaviours targeted by public policy rather than those most important to the general public.

Some of the pro-environmental behaviours mentioned by participants but not present in DEFRA's framework were more unusual or radical, such as following a vegan diet or attending environmental protests. Others not present might be considered frugal, for example repurposing old clothes or reusing grey water: 'I also recycle bathwater... I've got one of these pump things that you get from B&Q, so that you just throw a hose pipe out the window into a water butt, and this pump will empty it' (Participant 14). Finally, some behaviours mentioned but not in the framework may be associated with stigma (Hards, 2013; Day and Hitchings, 2011). Examples included keeping warm with extra layers, blankets or going to bed rather than turning on heating: 'if it's just me I wrap myself in sixteen layers and get into bed' (Participant 11).

Conversely, pro-environmental behaviours in DEFRA's framework that were not mentioned by participants were often behaviours contingent on high (disposable) incomes. These included installing renewable energy generation systems and other technologies, using trains instead of flying, or choosing certified low-impact products. Others implied significant community involvement and/or pre-existing community resources, for example taking part in the local planning process or using community tool swap schemes (of which, in Leeds, little evidence was found during the fieldwork period). Other behaviours not mentioned by participants are those which may not have been identified as specifically pro-environmental or were more specialist. Examples include choosing second-hand furniture, eco-driving techniques or using peat-free compost (which is also contingent upon having access to a garden/allotment). Additionally, some of the DEFRA behaviours were identified by participants as those they faced barriers to, for example installing renewable energy generation, making use of car shares or choosing products without excessive packaging.

Almost every participant described pro-environmental aspects of their lives which featured on the DEFRA list. Some were incidental, for example saving energy due to a limited income rather than primarily due to environmental concern. Preventing waste (including by recycling) and saving energy were the most commonly cited pro-environmental behaviours. This may reflect the increasing financial implications of energy use and the continuing focus on recycling by local government. Diverse reuse and recycling behaviours were

mentioned, from the commonplace (for example recycling domestic waste such as paper and plastic) to what might be considered more unusual – for example using one's own urine as a fertiliser.

Domestic contexts were frequently referenced by participants. Energy-saving behaviours included turning off lights and appliances: 'I've been trying not to have my TV on much and trying not using my laptop as much and I do try switching the lights off' (Participant 2). Making the most of heating when having it on, for example by drying clothing, was also described: '...and underwear and that on radiators, if radiators are on, basically why waste that heat?' (Participant 06). Meals were another topic frequently mentioned; food choice, preparation and minimising waste were all highlighted:

...not wasting food... looking really carefully 'right that needs eating up' or 'what can I make for that' and then put it in the freezer and not buying stuff that we're not gonna eat.
(Participant 12)

Minimising waste also extended to other household items: 'we try and repair as much as possible [...] everything gets reused' (Participant 11). For a few participants, many of these domestic activities were accomplished with the support of PAs or other household members:

my PAs help me with recycling and they bring the bin back
[...] my PAs wash the containers and recycle if possible
(Participant 15)

I've got a partner and son and one or the other of them –
usually my partner – puts [the bins] out and then son brings
them in (Participant 16)

Outside the home, some participants took part in gardening or conservation behaviours. A number also volunteered in community organisations or took part in environmental campaigns by writing letters: 'part of my activities at the moment are that I write to the government about environmental issues' (Participant 08). Others supported organisations with donations, although this was not always experienced entirely positively, as the extract below demonstrates:

...Sustrans and things like that... I still pay them money, but
I'm not *part of* them, if that makes sense [...] at least it means
that they've got some dosh to help pay for the materials, so
you know I still carry on doing things like that, but I don't feel –
I'm not part of it. (Participant 05)

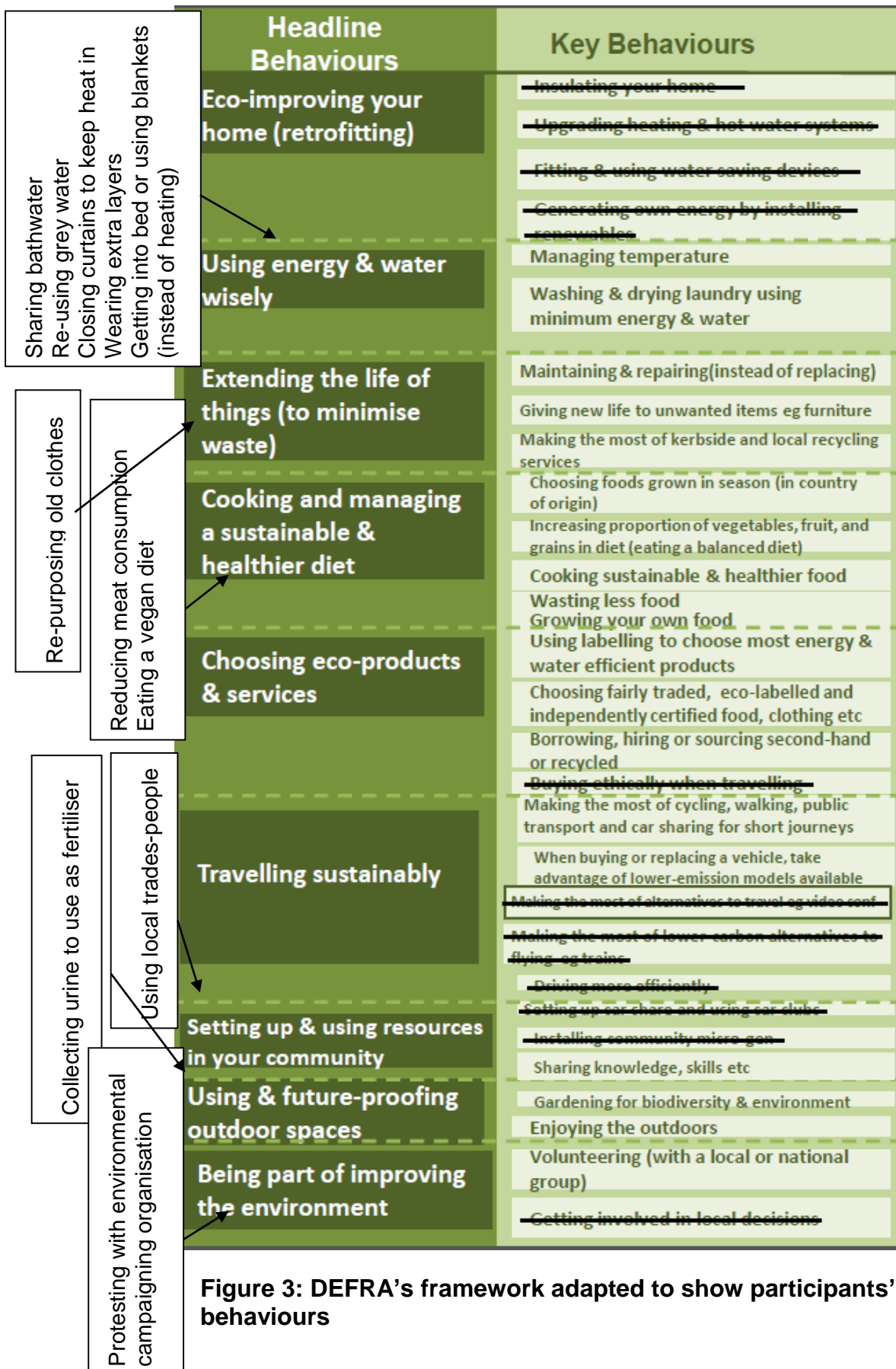


Figure 3: DEFRA's framework adapted to show participants' behaviours

Sub-Behaviours					Centre of Expertise on Influencing Behaviour, Defra				
Installing loft insulation	Topping up loft insulation	Installing cavity wall insulation	Installing solid wall insulation	Installing double glazing					
Upgrading boiler									
Upgrading to low flush toilet	Fitting water efficient shower head	Fixing dripping taps							
Wind	Solar / electric	Solar / water	Micro-CHP	Ground and air source heat pumps					
Fitting & using temperature controls									
Line drying laundry	Using right amount of detergent								
		Switching to green energy tariff							
Keep electrical goods for longer	Repairing electrical goods	Repairing furniture	Repairing clothes						
Appliances & electrical goods	Using furniture reuse organisations, or services such as Freecycle, ebay etc	Using furniture reuse organisations, or services such as Freecycle, ebay etc	Clothes to charity shops						
Disposing safely of batteries, paint	Recycling textiles & clothes	Registering with Mail Preference Service							
Home composting food waste	Planning meals ahead	Storing for quality & safety							
Sustainable fish such as MSC fish	Sustainable wood such as FSC wood	Low impact clothes	Recycled products	Choosing without excessive packaging					
Borrowing or hiring electrical goods	Choosing 2nd hand furniture	Choosing 2nd hand clothing	Using local hire / hire & swap schemes for tools etc						
	Combining trips	Using eco driving techniques	Maintaining tyre pressure						
Swapping skills	Finding / using local shops	Working with community to grow food	Comparing energy use within community						
Creating an environment for wildlife	Using rainwater and a water butt	Home composting garden waste	Using peat free compost						
Using your local green spaces									
Volunteering for local conservation project		Joining an environmental / conservation group							
Taking part in local planning process									

Figure 3 continued

Like this extract implies, being involved in a community – whether geographical or interest-based – was important to a number of participants. Despite the barriers faced to accessing community facilities (discussed later on), some participants described how they still tried to support the local or wider community. Examples included shopping choices or supporting local businesses: 'I buy a veg box every week from a local guy who's starting up in a small business' (Participant 12). For Participant 12 and others, this also involved considering the wider impact of purchases, as the following extract shows:

...I buy most of my food from the market... because it's better than the supermarket [...] much better for local economy, better for the environment, it's better food and... much cheaper, so I do my shopping on the market and from fair-trade shops. (Participant 15)

Non-geographical communities could also act as a site for pro-environmental behaviours, for example reusing clothing and furniture by distributing it through family networks:

...community... means a lot of different things to me... my nephew and niece and their family and my sisters in law will quite often turn up with a bag of jeans or t-shirts [...] it's not a physical thing... it's that kind of network of people that you know, and then the people they know, and the people know them afterwards, like my cousin, who lives in Lancashire, forty miles away, I gave her the cot that I'd had for my second son... (Participant 12)

Finally, a number of participants described ways they had considered to minimise the environmental impacts of their transport, despite significant barriers to pro-environmental travel modes (discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Seven). The majority of participants relied on private vehicles or taxis. For some of those who drove, mitigating their car's environmental impact was therefore a consideration. Fuel efficiency was highlighted as a key factor:

I'm also very conscious, I drive a car that's got very very low emissions [...] I didn't want anything big, you know I didn't want a gas-guzzling 4by4 [...] it's very low emissions, it's zero tax, it's one of these that when you pull up at traffic lights and junctions the engine cuts out... so that you're not constantly pumping out emissions and things like that, and then when you're ready to go it just picks up and goes again. (Participant 14)

Participant 18 talked about mitigating the impact of driving by giving lifts when she could:

...so I'll give lifts down into town, because I know that I can park quite close with my blue badge. So it's mainly for my benefit, but of course other people benefit from it as well.

She noted that despite relying on her car, her mileage was generally low. She speculated that this might be the case for other disabled people too: 'the fact is, is that we don't actually have high mileage, even though we use it a lot, most of it is quite short journeys'. Another participant, however, speculated that his low levels of fuel economy were due to driving many short journeys in a diesel-powered car. Working out the technical implications of different driving styles for polluting emissions is beyond the scope of this research, but also highlights the complex nature of some aspects of environmental knowledge.

For other participants, buses were a key form of transport. Again, although many barriers were experienced (discussed later on), using public transport is potentially a lower-carbon form of travel than private cars or taxis. This was somewhat contested between participants, however. For one, riding the bus was described as almost a 'moral' thing to do, while for another it was positioned as less pro-environmental than walking. Finally, a few participants walked. In most cases these were participants whose impairments were not directly mobility-related. For some of these, walking was specifically highlighted as less [emissions-related] energy intensive:

I personally walk miles usually, every day and I always feel quite happy that I'm not hopefully leaving a big carbon footprint and that I am... able to get about and walk about alright with the cane. (Participant 20)

Participant 08 mentioned the importance of his 'connection to the environment' in relation to walking and its relevance to his general health. He also highlighted his lack of commute as positive in terms of ecological footprint: 'I have less impact on the environment than before because I don't have to travel to work every day, I can be in one place.'

In the focus groups, responses were more varied. In the first focus group, with participants who volunteered at an environmental project, a number of environmentally friendly behaviours were described. Examples included saving energy by turning off lights and using energy-saving bulbs, and recycling at home. Most also walked or used public transport, and all were participating in conservation and gardening work at the project. In contrast, participants in the other two focus groups, recruited from a disability organisation, found it more

difficult to identify pro-environmental behaviours. Domestic recycling and gardening were mentioned by one group, and the other group mentioned recycling but also turning off lights and switching from a petrol to a diesel car. This second group in particular seemed to find it hard to come up with ideas, and asked the researcher for suggestions, as illustrated in this extract:

FG3 participant: I try to be careful and always turn switches off and stuff like that, and gas I don't leave on... but you know I can't think of much else, what else is there

FG3 participant: [to Researcher] go on you tell us

Pro-environmental behaviour is not always straightforward; some behaviours identified by participants as environmentally friendly are the subject of debate as to their environmental impacts, for example driving diesel cars instead of petrol. This was promoted by government in the last decade in an attempt to reduce carbon emissions (Lane and Potter, 2007) but is now considered a key cause of air pollution that affects human health (Carslaw et al., 2011). Keeping a central heating system always on low rather than heating it from cold every morning was also mentioned, but is not energy-saving for the majority of UK householders (Energy Savings Trust, 2014). Two participants pointed out that some behaviours often considered pro-environmental are not always automatically so:

...a lot of things that I think people think are green aren't actually very green... like knitting and natural fibres, well people forget how much processing and damage is done by that [...] and the amount of water used to process stuff is massive... and how much things like that are undervalued.
(Participant 12)

...but gardening in itself isn't an environmental thing to do is it? Cos you can garden organically, which is an environmental thing to do, or you can garden in such a way that you've got every pesticide and insecticide being used, which isn't organic, or which isn't helpful... (Participant 17)

Many also demonstrated uncertainty about particular 'environmentally friendly' behaviours. Again, these issues highlight the complex and sometimes contested nature of environmental knowledge (Skill, 2012). This links back to the contested nature of conceptual definitions discussed in Chapter One. Additionally, some participants had difficulties distinguishing pro-environmental behaviours from healthy behaviours (e.g. talking about using energy or transport modes in the sense of keeping fit).

Describing behaviours that participants in this research were able to carry out is important because it demonstrates their agency. Previous research with regard to disability and environmental issues focused mainly on barriers and difficulties, and in so doing presented a passive and sometimes victim-like image of disabled people. Issues of agency and participants' opinions on aspects such as rights and responsibility regarding the environment will also be discussed in Chapter Eight. However, another focus of this research is the aspects of sustainable lifestyles from which disabled people may be excluded, and this will be explored first.

5.2 Barriers to pro-environmental behaviours

The barriers encountered by participants can be broadly categorised into four themes:

1. physical
2. organisational
3. financial, and
4. social.

Again, different participants talked about a variety of different barriers they had experienced. The type of impairment(s) experienced by participants was relevant, as were other individual factors such as household and employment circumstances. Physical and organisational factors generally created barriers. Differing financial and social circumstances could either disable or enable, however, depending on different demographic characteristics of participants. Therefore, this chapter focuses on physical and organizational barriers, while the following chapter will discuss financial and social circumstances as barriers and facilitators.

Some participants had also found – or had considered – solutions which would enable them to access particular activities or which would lessen the environmental impact of certain access requirements. Where relevant, these are included alongside describing the related barrier. Where these examples

appear, they again demonstrate that many of the participants were actively attempting to lead more sustainable lifestyles, despite facing significant barriers.

While there are crossovers between some of the themes (for example a particular physical or social barrier may be caused by an organisational barrier), using these categories enables a detailed but concise exploration of the range of different experiences. As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.1.3), where barriers are due to discrimination against disabled people they are instances of disablism, while ableism is where expectations and valorisations of the norm exclude disabled people. In practice, both disablism and ableism may be present in particular barriers faced by disabled people because they are two sides of the same coin: exclusion.

5.2.1 Physical barriers

Physical barriers have long been highlighted as a central issue for disabled people. It is unsurprising that these were also experienced regarding different aspects of sustainable lifestyles. More unexpected in the context of this research, however, was that a more fundamental issue of environmental access – i.e. access to the physical environment (both built and natural) – emerged as a key concern of participants during focus groups and interviews. The research advertising and information sheets described the research interests in terms of ‘looking after the environment’ and being ‘environmentally friendly’. However, some participants chose to focus on issues of access to the environment, revealing this as the aspect of the research most important to them. Therefore, these issues are considered first.

5.2.1.1 Access to built and natural environments

The inaccessibility of the built environment has been a focus of much research (see for example Barnes, 1991). It began to be addressed in law as far back as the 1970s (Barnes, 2011). If access to nature and green space is an important factor in instigating environmental concern (DEFRA, 2008b), access to the built environment is a fundamental aspect of accessing the outdoors. Interaction with the natural environment was central to some participants’ concern and engagement with environmental issues. It was also a site of pro-environmental

behaviour regarding conservation work, gardening, and growing food. The built environment was also a site of multiple barriers for many participants, however. This was the case despite significant improvements over the past few decades, as some participants also acknowledged.

For two of the focus groups, environmental barriers were particularly significant to their discussion. Because of this, focus group findings in relation to environmental access will predominantly be drawn upon for this section, although where individual interview findings can enhance or provide depth they will also be used. The barriers experienced by focus group participants were substantial; in some cases as fundamental as being reliably able to get out the front door:

I can't go out, cos I can't put this wheelchair outside, so my other one is a push one – a manual one, and that's somebody to push me. And my husband's too weak... he's not steady on his feet. (Participant, FG3)

Participants also described barriers experienced when they ventured out, such as a lack of step-free access. Additionally, other people's actions had disabling consequences for focus group participants when they did leave their homes. A common example of this was parking over the kerb, meaning a wheelchair user could not get past on the pavement, or parking in a reserved blue badge bay in front of one participant's house:

Where I live – I've got a parking spot... most cars use my spot when I need it, and it's very difficult [...] when cars in the way, somebody's got my spot, when it's a disabled spot, and it's supposed to be for my disability [...] cos I've got a carer that comes to my house, and she can't get in. (Participant, FG2)

Most individual interview participants also described barriers in the immediate environment outside their homes. Pavements – a basic element of getting from one place to another by wheeling or walking – posed a number of problems. Poor maintenance, either through wear and tear such as potholes, or damage left unrepaired such as that caused by cars parking over kerbs, meant pavements could be difficult or impossible to negotiate:

...like parking cars on pavements – the pavements are damaged then you go over it – your chair tends to wobble and you don't feel safe... so you go halfway round the street to get to somewhere where you want to get across the road.
(Participant 06)

A few participants suggested that better pavement maintenance would improve their access when outside; 'if the pavements are better... it'd be easier to walk on – that's not immaculate but regular' (Participant 15). Participant 07 (whose interview was not recorded, but notes were taken of the discussion) also highlighted how damaged pavements create a potential health hazard and created extra costs. These costs are not just for repairs but indirect costs if a person trips and falls – such as hospital bills, re-ablement services and so on. Another issue with pavements, for participants who used wheelchairs or other mobility aids, was a lack of dropped kerbs:

sometimes we've got a ten mile hike because of one kerb isn't dropped, so you can't get down it so you've got to go the long way round or you can't go at all. (Participant 16)

A lack of dropped kerbs could also be exacerbated by obstacles on the pavement, such as cars or wheelie bins left outside houses. This could mean lengthy detours for a wheelchair user, and could also contribute to an over-stimulating environment for those with mental health conditions. Obstacles on pavements were also an issue for participants with visual impairments.

Participant 07, who has a visual impairment, was involved with a campaign about accessibility of the built environment called 'Pavements are for People'. As well as highlighting the problem of obstacles on the pavement, he was concerned with the spread of 'shared spaces'. These can remove many of the markers that visually impaired people and guide dogs are trained to use to locate themselves when walking around, and are causing increased difficulties for older and disabled people.

Shared Space is a concept which aims to address health and environmental issues through disrupting the current unequal relationship between pedestrians and traffic (Purdue et al., 2009). This is achieved by reshaping street environments in a variety of ways, such as removing demarcations between traditional pedestrian and vehicle spaces to encourage lower speeds and a shift towards drivers prioritising pedestrians (DfT, 2011b). Although encouraged by the DfT, it has been critiqued from a number of perspectives. Moody and Melia (2013) for example highlight significant flaws in the evidence base referred to by the DfT, including that pedestrians do not seem to be prioritised by drivers. Charities related to visual impairment such as Guide Dogs have also highlighted the problems that exist for people with visual impairments. Imrie (2012, 2013)

has also written about shared space as an example of 'disembodied urban design' which is ableist in its assumptions of the types of bodies that exist in particular spaces. He notes that the consultation processes used by local authorities are constitutive of a context in which the opinions of people with visual impairments are ignored. The prevalence of shared spaces despite these concerns creates the risk that public spaces may increasingly become less accessible for some disabled people.

Local shops were also an issue raised by focus group and individual interview participants. Although the group discussing this were aware of legislation that should have obligated shops to create accessible facilities, their experience was that this was not always followed through:

Some of the shops near me on [road name] they're not accessible. I've reported it to the post office loads of times, my mum did as well on my behalf – 'oh we'll get round to doing it' and they haven't done. They've cleared in the shop to make it wider, but they haven't put a ramp outside. (Participant, FG3)

Interview participants also highlighted aspects of shop access. Some acknowledged how much things have improved:

It's better, a lot better than it used to be, but still places that aren't [...] you find a lot of places now'll have the little stair lifts and stuff to go up them so going back 20-30 years – back to the 80s, so many places were completely inaccessible if you were in a wheelchair. (Participant 09)

Significant issues still remained, however, such as the recent removal of some benches from the shops and city centre:

[the seating has] all gone from the market... it doesn't look any better for 'em not being there, but there's an awful lot of people who now have lost the ability perhaps to be able to come into Leeds because the seats've gone! (Participant 16)

Participant 16 highlighted another an example of a recently re-fitted shop where access had not been fully considered, meaning that some aspects were still not accessible: 'they've thought of putting a ramp there, but they haven't thought of putting a ramp in relation to the goods inside the store'. She also described how many cash points were too high up for comfortable access. Often what counted as accessible was not actually equal treatment: 'why should somebody in a wheelchair have to press a button outside the bank and do their banking on the doorstep when everybody else can go inside the bank?'. Participant 18 also

described the amount of bin yards she saw when, for example, accessing hotels or listed buildings. These experiences of improved access – but still not equality – highlight the limitations of existing access legislation that only requires ‘reasonable adjustments’ and minimum standards, reflecting the difference between accessibility as objective and subjective (see Chapter One section 1.3).

Access to green spaces also was experienced as problematic. Some of the focus group participants described the experience of ‘looking at’ nature – as opposed to being able to engage with it:

Apart from moving short distances, my environment is not very accessible really, I mean it’s like I can look at fields and countryside but wouldn’t be able to access those fields or the countryside, apart from by car or something like that.
(Participant, FG2)

This experience was echoed by some of the individual interview participants: ‘the environment is basically out of our reach if you’re in a wheelchair’ (Participant 06). Participant 05 also described the experience of ‘looking at’ as opposed to actively engaging with nature:

The green environment’s disappeared, because you can’t get to it, I can’t get to it like I used to [...] if I want to access the green environment, I have to drive to it now, whereas I walked or cycled, and then when you get there often you can only walk a little way from the car park... so the green environment is almost like it doesn’t exist. It’s something I see from the car window. (Participant 05)

Participants in Focus Group Three mentioned parks in their discussion and noted that Leeds has a number of large parks, which seemed to be experienced positively. Only one of them actually used a local park, however, and some others mentioned that they ‘used to go’.

Maintaining paths in natural environments such as parks was another key issue raised by individual interview participants, although again this was acknowledged as an area that had experienced some improvements. However, being forced to keep to the path could also be a negative experience because it meant not being able to participate in activities ‘off’ the path:

Worst thing you can do is going through a park unless there’s a path [...] you are stuck to the track... you can’t really go onto grass and round, like you can’t just have a picnic with someone, you’ve gotta find a bench and have it there, which

they don't always tend to put these sort of picnic benches out, or if they do it's on woodchip – which is another thing that's the worst thing you can have is woodchip, you just can't get through it. (Participant 06)

Parking – and specifically, parking nearby – was an essential aspect of accessing green space for some participants. A lack of parking (or car parks being full) made some sites inaccessible. Participant 16 talked in detail about access to green spaces. She recognised that there were tensions between creating access and maintaining beauty spots, but also pointed out that there were often ways round these issues, if the right investment was put in:

...if they can plan a train route from London to Leeds, York and wherever else it's going, and they can plan it so you're 'sposed to be able to stand in the countryside and not see it cos it goes with the contours of the land, there must be ways of providing access to places – and not just access to the bottom of it. Like you go to [local heritage site], and you go like down one side of [the site], but try going over the other side – it goes up a cliff and down the cliff-side, not very accessible at all for even people with crutches or any form of walking disabilities.

Finally, the accessibility of public toilets was also raised as an issue, and the availability of toilets in green spaces was a particular concern. In the extract below, the local park toilets were located inside the park café, which had seasonal opening hours. This presented a problem when visiting outside of summertime:

I mean the cafe might still be open Monday to Friday [...] but on a weekend it will be shut. Now when the cafe's shut the toilets are shut – so – and sometimes there's disabled or elderly, you might need the loo more often than perhaps you would've otherwise so if there isn't a loo, then you just can't go. (Participant 16)

As can be seen from these descriptions, access to both the built and natural environments was problematic for many participants in this research. Many of the built environment access issues pointed out here (although now fewer in number) are similar to those raised by research conducted over 20 years ago (Barnes, 1991). Despite the subsequent entry of disability equality legislation to the statute books, they remain problematic. That so many participants raised these issues points to a gap in provision – or, as highlighted with regard to access to shops and other facilities, potentially a failure of legislation with regard to equal access for disabled people (see also Imrie, 2013). However,

where access to the natural environment is achieved, there can be significant benefits for disabled people.

Key Informant 03 had coordinated a project aimed at increasing the access of BME disabled people to the natural environment. The organisation she worked for decided to run a series of outdoor activities and facilitated the access and inclusion of a number of disabled people from BME communities within a particular city. She described various barriers that had needed to be overcome such as training of staff and challenging risk assessments with limiting conceptualisations of disability, as well as organising accessible transport to the activity location because of the lack of accessibility of public transport. While they began by using sites with accessible facilities, as participants' confidence grew the project progressed and they dealt head on with access issues in the natural environment:

... We felt 'no this is maybe a bit too safe' and not quite exactly what we wanted to do, so then we started visiting more... wild sites. And do you know, yeah there were challenges, but we managed great – people loved it, we didn't put any kind of heavily special measures in place, we did things like for example where there wasn't a wheelchair path we got one of our consultants got some scrap plywood from the back of his truck and he sort of made a ramp to use and it worked fine, people got to where they needed to get to... (Key Informant 03)

She also described a specific incident where a site they visited turned out to have no accessible toilet (reflecting the concerns of individual interview participants above):

we had to kind of fashion a sort of outdoor toilet situation out in the woods so that people could sit and use it, and do you know ... when we were carrying out the evaluation, the number of people that said using the makeshift outside toilet in the woods was one of the best things about doing this project! Because people felt that everything else had been so controlled in their lives and not been able to do something that a nondisabled person would take for granted, if you're stuck in the middle of nowhere and you can't use the toilet, you go behind a tree and do the best you can, this was not something that especially a lot of the wheelchair users in the group had ever thought they'd ever be able to do... that stood out as something quite liberating for them...

It is interesting to note that what began as an inaccessible situation became a liberating one. This account demonstrates the value of the natural environment for increasing people's confidence as well as general enjoyment. Existing

research on access to natural environments has described how disabled people can experience feelings of vulnerability in relation to the 'unpredictable and uncontrollable' nature of the countryside and open space (Countryside Agency, 2005a, p.55). Key Informant 03's account above, however, suggests that this 'vulnerability' is not inevitable and can be countered depending on the experience achieved.

As mentioned at the start of this section, while access to the built environment and to green spaces may not in itself count as pro-environmental, being able to access green spaces and encounter nature is important in providing a foundation for environmental concerns. Also, public and natural environments are a key site for pro-environmental behaviours. If these spaces are inaccessible to disabled people this may significantly impact on their ability to participate in those behaviours. More fundamentally, however, being able to access spaces outside the home is important for many other aspects of participation in current society.

5.2.1.2 Physical barriers in relation to pro-environmental behaviours

Returning to physical barriers directly associated with sustainable lifestyles, many of the barriers described reflect the lack of accessibility as 'standard' for domestic behaviours. Examples included problems associated with manoeuvring wheelie bins or the weight of glass and successfully transporting it to communal recycling facilities (recycling is discussed in depth in Chapter Seven and so is only briefly mentioned here). Food packaging was another issue raised. While participants were concerned about excessive packaging, it tended to be associated with prepared food that is more accessible (such as pre-cut vegetables and fruit or ready meals). Although much of this packaging can – theoretically – now be recycled, information about recycling was an associated issue. Participant 15 suggested that more accessible recycling information on packaging – for example tactile information or larger print – could enable her to recycle independently. Difficulties understanding recycling information more generally were raised by focus group and interview participants, and Participant 16 suggested more general information on what could be recycled and went in different bins would be helpful: '...for everybody, information about what you can and what you can't recycle within the household

stuff would be useful'. Additionally, some participants suggested that more public recycling bins on the streets would enable people to recycle when out and about.

A number of physical barriers were also experienced with regard to energy saving. Participants described using less energy efficient appliances because they were more accessible, or having extra energy usage due to electrical aids and adaptations. Participant 06 described how using an electric wheelchair affected his energy use:

[indicating electric wheelchair] it's plugged in all the time [...] you do tend to use more energy anyway cos it's like with lights and things sometimes there are places you go where you just can't turn lights out or whatever cos you can't reach 'em. (Participant 06)

Needing to keep warm also affected energy use. Participants described having extra energy needs because of physical barriers to moving around, but also because warmth often facilitated movement and relieved pain:

I have big issues around being cold, it leaves me very painful, and it's well off the Richter scale, so like at home – we tend to have the heating on sometimes when everybody else has got theirs off. (Participant 16)

Participant 18 suggested a potential improvement in this area. She felt that better advice for disabled people around saving energy and the provision of energy monitors would be helpful.

Physical barriers to gardening were another issue, with some of the barriers similar to those relating to accessing green spaces, for example inaccessible terrain. A lack of raised beds or un-adapted gardening tools also proved problematic for some participants. Participant 10 had bought an ergonomic trowel to enable him to carry on gardening, but he pointed out this was significantly more expensive than basic trowels. This was also an issue raised in one of the focus groups:

There is different equipment that you can get to help you do [gardening] [...] there is actually a shop in the [local shopping centre], and you can go in there and they have all sorts of things for disabled people. But unfortunately you've gotta buy them, you know, but at least we have got access to them, if people need to use it. (Participant, FG2)

Other physical barriers to gardening could be overcome with the assistance of other householders. Participant 05 talked about how she directs the gardening while her husband carries it out, as he can access parts of the garden that she cannot reach:

My direction is from the top of the garden which is on a hill, and he has to do it at the bottom of the garden... it's got a short but very difficult slope – I don't go down to the bottom of the garden anymore.

Participant 05 also raised the possibility of giving neighbours with smaller gardens access to their garden, so that the space could still be used even if she didn't actively garden herself.

Two participants mentioned using personal assistants (PAs) to facilitate domestic behaviours that they would otherwise not be able to do, for example sorting and taking out recycling or preparing food from scratch. Regarding physical barriers in the home, Participant 06 also described a slightly unusual workaround: he created his own solutions for things like lifting objects without requiring lots of physical strength, due to his background in engineering. This helped with domestic tasks: 'a lot of things you can get round, with a little bit of invention'.

A number of participants described physical barriers to using public transport. This is despite long-running campaigns and a significant amount of policymaking relating to the accessibility of public transport for disabled people as a key aspect of inclusion. For example, the distance to bus stops and lack of seating at many stops were highlighted as significant barriers. Many participants reported rarely using public transport (although some had been regular users in the past) because of these issues. A few participants also mentioned barriers to cycling. As is probably obvious, un-adapted bicycles are not accessible to many people with impairments. They were highlighted as such by a number of participants: 'we don't really have the choice of cycling or whatever, cos even if I had a tricycle I couldn't cycle, cos of me legs' (Participant 06). Modified bicycles will be discussed later in this chapter, and the implications for disabled people of the way cycling is perceived by many within the environmental movement will be discussed further in the following chapter.

In relation to transport, however, by far the greatest number of barriers mentioned were organisational or financial barriers – such as those relating to

how buses and bus journeys are operated. This may be because many of the more immediate physical barriers (for example steps up to buses or lack of a wheelchair space) have already been addressed by the enactment of the DDA provisions, but have therefore been revealed to be only one aspect relevant for equal access. This type of occurrence – of physical accessibility not leading to actual accessibility – has also been noted in other work on disability and physical access (Imrie, 2012), and is an example of a mismatch between objective and subjective assessments of accessibility (Iwarsson and Stahl, 2003).

As noted in the previous section, local shops often proved inaccessible. For some participants, this lack of access was described as a barrier to being environmentally friendly because it meant having to rely on larger supermarkets, as well as having fewer opportunities to take part in the local community. Similarly, physical access at sites such as a local conservation organisation, or to the venues where local environmental groups held meetings, meant barriers to participation. This was also noted in Abbott and Porter's research (2013). Accessible information was another aspect of this issue – both a lack of accessible information about particular organisations but also a lack of information about accessibility. The trend towards accessing information online caused problems where the websites used were not accessible. There was often a lack of availability or phasing out of telephone inquiries. Even where some organisations did attempt to offer alternative formats, this could still lead to barriers:

Whenever I've [requested accessible materials from organisation] before, it's been five or six weeks out of date, which means that if there are any events, that you're a bit out of time for those, you know cos by the time you get your copy, it's usually, you know behind the main schedule of things. (Participant 20)

Access to protests was also an issue which encompassed physical as well as financial and social barriers, as described by Participant 20:

There's a demonstration about the Arctic [...] this march in London, but I was thinking it's a great idea but the obstacles to overcome as a disabled person [...] a) I'd have to get to London, b) you know there's the cost, c) there's the fact that if you were to get within the march, unless you had quite a few people who were prepared to either guide you or come alongside you and work with you on the march, you know you're not really going to be involved.

A lack of consideration of disability issues by organisers of protests and campaigns can lead to disabled people's physical exclusion from public spaces. This can have implications for participation in forums constituted around an idea of the 'public', as highlighted by Barnes and colleagues (2003b). If disabled people cannot even 'get through the door' then in-person involvement is likely to be limited. Participant 13, who had in the past been actively involved with various environmental campaigns, gave a detailed description of his experience of organisations and access. He pointed out that finances were an issue with regard to choosing accessible buildings, for example – but again this could mean physical exclusion. Negative experiences were not inevitable, however:

I'd go to the [group] summer gathering, every summer, and they would do their damndest to make it as accessible as possible for me, so they would do care for me, help me up in the morning, but it's always in a field, they build wheelchair accessible composting toilets, take portable hoists, recharge electric wheelchairs, they did everything they possibly could, but ultimately it was in a field [...] I mean whenever you're camping everything's ten times more difficult than it is in a house isn't it, and if you've already got things ten times more difficult because of access difficulties due to disability it can make it insurmountable and unsupportable. (Participant 13)

5.2.2 Organisational barriers

Organisational barriers arose where pro-environmental behaviours were explicitly contingent on external services. Public transport was therefore implicated in many organisational barriers for participants. For example, some interview participants had bus passes entitling them to free journeys, but others struggled to obtain them. Even where participants had successfully obtained bus passes, however, they were not without restrictions, as highlighted by this extract:

Participant 01 – I do have a concession card, which is good
 Researcher – does that only work after half past 9?
 Participant 01 – Yep. Cos apparently you don't need to go anywhere, and after half 11.

Although free bus travel is a key feature of accessibility for disabled people in sustainability-focused policies, such as the sustainable transport strategy (DfT 2011a), participants' experiences indicate problems with its implementation.

Participant 05 described how a change in route had made buses effectively inaccessible to her because they no longer went past the top of her road: '[...] the bus route disappeared when I was still using a walking stick, and I could access the buses for a short while'. Crowded buses presented problems for those with visible and invisible physical impairments. This also impacted on participants with mental health conditions: 'I have panic attacks when they're busy' (Participant 04). Buses turning up on time – reliability – was also an issue for some participants, as was being able to safely disembark at the right stop. This latter problem was experienced both by those who were not able to stand to signal the bus driver to stop, and participants with visual impairments who were sometimes 'forgotten' by the driver.

Similarly, Participant 15 mentioned that she struggled with buses that set off too fast: 'I don't feel confident using buses because they're very fast, I often fall down'. Crowding, reliability, standing up and speed are all related problems – late buses often become crowded buses, with extra pressure on the driver if there are penalties for lateness, as described by Participant 18. Bus companies have targets for reliability, although sometimes this is not in their control. Participant 18's interview may shed some additional light on this. She knew a bus driver who had been taken to task by his bus company because he prioritised time for safe boarding and alighting but therefore sometimes ran late. This had led to disciplinary action, despite the high regard he was held in by many passengers.

Participant 13 also highlighted an issue that will also be discussed further under social barriers regarding the use of the wheelchair space on buses – competition for space between wheelchairs and buggies:

Some of it's passenger attitudes, I'd say some of it's driver attitudes sometimes, but it's company policy, [bus company] state very clearly on their website 'wheelchair users do not have priority for the wheelchair space'.

This issue has recently been the subject of a legal dispute between a disabled passenger and a bus company. Although the case was initially won by the passenger, the decision was overturned on appeal (FirstGroup PLC v. Paulley, 2014). Train travel was also implicated in organisational barriers – for example the lack of spontaneity due to having to book assistance, and the frequent unreliability of this assistance even when booked:

...you have to phone and book to start off with, say 'please can I have help', they're supposed to then phone up the station where you going to, to tell them that you're on the train to be there to help you, and quite often – three times to memory – I've had to use the train on my own and on all three occasions when I got on at Leeds I had the help on, but when I got off [...] there was nobody there to help me. (Participant 18)

A number of participants suggested potential improvements to public transport. Participant 11, for example, felt that better funded public transport would lead to less crowding of services due to the potential for increased timetables, and others pointed out that if bus services were more reliable or it was possible to book a wheelchair space then buses would be easier to use.

Some participants also talked about electric vehicles – both scooters and electric wheelchairs as well as electric cars. A few discussed the possibility of an electric car instead of petrol/diesel, but most seemed to feel that the technology was not yet developed enough to replace their current vehicles. Participant 18 suggested that in the long term, providing electric vehicle charging points alongside streetlamps might enable more people to make use of electric cars. Electric vehicles are available on the Motability scheme, however they require high advance payments – upfront costs to users. This means in practice they are not yet easily available except to those disabled people who have high incomes or personal wealth. Participant 07 raised an accessibility issue relating to electric cars, however. Because their engines are quiet, they are particularly difficult for people with visual impairments to hear when they are waiting to cross the road, which has potential safety implications. This has also been demonstrated in a report commissioned by Guide Dogs, although the report noted that the problem applied to all vehicles with quiet engines and not just electric (Welsman, 2013).

Housing and related services were another area where organisational barriers arose. This is particularly relevant for disabled people who are on low incomes and rely on council housing, or who need adapted accommodation or live in residential homes. For instance, two participants living in council housing had experienced maintenance or regeneration work being carried out which had not been properly completed. In one case the work was explicitly intended to make the property more energy efficient, but had actually led to increased draughts in the property:

They put these doors and windows in, yeah when the housing lady was there she said 'I can feel a draught', I said 'well exactly'. The windows are shut, the door is shut, and it's double glazed, but there's a draught coming in from somewhere. (Participant 18)

Recycling was another issue related to housing. For one participant, the accessible student accommodation she had been assigned did not have any recycling facilities. For another, who lived in a residential home, the issue was that due to the residential home being classed as a business for council tax purposes, he could not get his recycling collected by the council. The home's managers declined to pay extra for recycling as well as business waste collection. In other cases, where recycling was collected, assisted collections were in some cases reported to be useful (where a person who is disabled can apply to the local authority for assistance to have their wheelie bins collected from outside their homes and returned by the bin men, rather than having to wheel them in and out by themselves). For other participants, however, getting these set up involved much bureaucracy. Participant 12, for example, described having a lot of problems finding the right information and getting it set up for her mother-in-law, but once it was set up it worked fine.

Related to organisational barriers is the wider context of financial cuts affecting services for disabled people. Participant 03 mentioned financial issues or cuts to some of the voluntary groups he attended. A number of participants also reported either experiencing cuts to their benefits or being at risk of this. Equally, environmental services facing cuts can impact on what is available to disabled people. This was described by one of the Key Informants who worked in the environmental sector. A government-funded conservation project she had worked on that had begun a programme extending access to disabled people was cut when the organisation had to make savings due to funding cuts. Participant 13 also talked about the issue of limited funding for environmental groups more generally affecting access for disabled people:

Impoverished organisations tend not to have the money they would like to spend on making things as accessible as they would like to, so you know they can be – inaccessible buildings because they're the only ones they could get and they can afford.

5.3 Beyond Leeds – access issues encountered by Key Informants

As described in the methodology, an attempt was made to begin comparing Leeds experiences with those from other parts of the UK. Although only three Key Informants were successfully interviewed, their accounts point to the usefulness of considering the wider national context. Key Informant 02's interview focused on a different aspect of environmentalism, which will be discussed later; Key Informants 01 and 03 are therefore the ones primarily referenced here.

Key Informant 01 described how, in her local authority, people with mental health conditions are not eligible for bus passes – even where they have had their driving license removed (for example due to the effects of medication or particular symptoms). This is different from the experience reported by participants from Leeds, but points to a potentially significant issue in terms of access to public transport and mobility for people with mental health conditions. As she described, this can influence their ability to attend appointments with relevant health professionals or support groups. Key Informant 01 also faced the potential need to move from where she is currently living due to recent Coalition government-imposed reductions in housing benefits. She described the protective health effects of living in a 'nice' area where she had good links and strong community support:

Basically the only reason I'm doing as well as I am at the moment [...] is because I've had such amazingly good community support, and if I moved somewhere where I'd lost that then I'd basically be sitting in bed all day with a blanket over my head and not coming out.

Key Informant 03, meanwhile, lived in Scotland and had experience with remote, rural communities. She described how on trips to major cities in England she noticed significant differences in accessibility – for example regarding public transport:

I'll go out in central London and take the tube and the buses quite happily, in a way that I wouldn't do [at home] [...] I feel much more limited up here, I don't use buses at home at all.

She described a lower number of low-floor buses, unmanned train stations, and older trains which had not yet been refurbished to current accessibility standards, as well as taxis refusing to take guide dogs or not carrying wheelchair ramps and a lack of equality training for drivers. A key issue was the number of small independent transport providers, meaning it was difficult for disability organisations to engage with them all, plus budgets and logistics were more of an issue than they would be for larger providers.

Another issue regarding mobility was the lack of coverage for navigational devices: 'a lot of the GPS systems that blind people are now starting to use [...] a lot of them just don't work here in our rural areas'. Key Informant 03's account also highlights a limitation of this research in that it focused on people living in or near a major city, which has implications in terms of access to services and so on. From her work with people in more rural areas, she also noted that rural communities in Scotland were often much more remote than those in England, which caused a number of access difficulties:

...In the far north of Scotland we have all the islands where people are dependent on boats for getting around and sometimes have a language barrier if their first language is Gallic and not English, so they can be extremely isolated and very often can't attend a lot of the disability events that go on in... the bigger cities [...] it was a completely different culture there, their needs were totally different. People were probably a lot more motivated than they are in the city areas, because they have to be, because it's the only way that they can fight for things, but things that we take for granted living here in terms of just basic knowledge of what service provision is there to help, people in the north didn't have that...

Key Informant 02's account, finally, was somewhat different from those of other participants and key informants in this research and does not fit so simply into an account of barriers experienced. Based on her experiences of both providing and receiving nursing care (due to a personal experience of impairment), she had begun the process of setting up a community interest company to provide high quality nursing care in an environmentally sustainable way. She named her approach 'deep green' and described it as foregrounding environmental sustainability in a context (health care) where environmental concerns were often ignored. In terms of a perspective on contributing to a more sustainable way of life she suggested that taking an evidence-based approach to procurement, rather than just accepting disposability as standard, would be positive in terms of reducing waste in the healthcare sector. Her entire initiative

was based around the idea of a more sustainable way of life for those disabled people needing intensive nursing care.

5.4 Impairment effects

Before concluding this chapter, it should be highlighted that many participants also described impairment effects which limited their participation in sustainable lifestyles. These are included here with consideration to the fact that they fall outside the definition of 'disability' used in this thesis; disability occurs when 'the restrictions of activity experienced by people with impairment are socially imposed' (Thomas, 2004a, p.580). The issues described here are not those of disability but those of impairment (although that is not to say that some could be reconceptualised as social issues if the ability expectations implied in some accounts were considered). For this section, however, it is important to note, as many of the participants in this research experienced, that some barriers are experienced because of impairment. This is not to imply a tragedy model idea of disability, but to simply highlight that pain and fatigue are often daily realities for some disabled people, and that a social focus on disability should not erase these experiences.

A number of participants talked about how increasing impairment had impacted on their ability to be involved in public environmental behaviours; as Participant 13 noted: 'I have limited energy for campaigns'. Similarly, fluctuating impairments affected involvement: 'if I were weller with this illness I could do more volunteering' (Participant 02). Fluctuating impairments also affected timed activities such as gardening:

I just didn't have the energy really to keep up with [gardening]... you get particular growing periods or planting out periods – well if I'm not particularly well then, I've kind of bugged up the whole year – and then made myself feel worse and summat else I haven't achieved. So I don't grow my own. (Participant 12)

Transport was another issue where health issues were raised. Talking about a decision to fly rather than take the train to visit relatives in France, one participant described how his health was impacted by the length of a journey: 'the practical problem is I get ill when I'm travelling. So a quick journey is much

better than a long journey. Long journey I get exhausted and start to have really severe problems...' (Participant 08). Participant 19, meanwhile, discussed the potential for using forms of transport other than the car. He had recently been receiving treatment that was improving his physical strength: 'in the longer term if I could get stronger, and I could walk further, then maybe I could look at using other methods of transport. Because I'd become less reliant on the car, because actually I could walk a bit further'.

Pain was mentioned by a number of participants. It was particularly an issue in relation to cold temperatures and therefore an additional need for heating: 'I also get very bad joint pain, which is particularly bad if it's cold, so... my house is always very hot' (Participant 09). Similarly, for some participants pain could limit their physical activity, as described in this account of gardening:

'so just having the energy to dig is one thing [...] but physically digging can be quite hard because of pain and it can be quite hard work, and then getting down... on the ground to put things in can be quite difficult' (Participant 10).

These are just a few of the impairment-related issues described by participants, but they serve to highlight that simply addressing disabling barriers will not in itself mean that people with impairments can fully engage in every pro-environmental activity currently available. It is also worth reflecting on the fact that individual impairments are another aspect of diversity in society, and that the vast majority of people will experience impairment at some time in their life (Kafer, 2013). Issues of rights, responsibilities and capacities are therefore relevant, particularly where environmentalism is framed as an individual rather than a collective activity. These issues will be discussed further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

5.5 Summary

Two barrier types – physical and organisational – have been explored in this chapter, as well as pro-environmental behaviours of all types which were reported by participants. It seems clear that, for the participants in this research, physical and organisational barriers play a significant part in keeping

sustainable lifestyles inaccessible. Despite disability equality legislation, basic accessibility in many areas is still problematic and even limited measures (such as free bus travel) seem to struggle with implementation. It seems that potential synergies between disability equality and sustainability are often not reaching down to disabled people's lived experiences.

It is useful, however, to highlight different types of barriers to demonstrate that addressing just one will not create access, because of the social and material factors implicated in perpetuating disability. Similarly, noting impairment effects also is relevant to highlight that some issues, such as pain, are not so easily solved – but also to indicate that impairment is another aspect of diversity.

These findings suggest much more complexity regarding access to sustainable lifestyles than has been demonstrated in previous research. The following chapter continues with the concept of barriers to consider two other barrier types – financial and social. These are more complex because, depending on the particular participant's circumstances, financial and social factors may act as barriers *or* facilitators of sustainable lifestyles.

6 The Influence of Financial and Social Circumstances

This chapter explores social and financial factors that can have different effects depending on the individual's circumstances – in some cases facilitating rather than barring action. It continues with the theme of barriers begun in Chapter Five. The interactions between finances and pro-environmental behaviours are quite complex. Different financial circumstances and their effects are therefore discussed in some depth. Then the chapter turns to social factors, and experiences with the wider environmental movement will be explored. These indicate significant tensions between disability equality and environmental sustainability in many areas of the movement. Links to concepts that were outlined at the start of the thesis, such as ableism, will begin to be made.

6.1 Financial circumstances

Depending on individual circumstances, financial factors could facilitate or constrain pro-environmental behaviours. Finances are a factor in 'creating' accessibility (Pirie, 1979). For a few participants, a good wage meant being able to pay for accessibility. Participant 14, for example, described how many of the adaptations to his house would not have been possible on a reduced or retirement income:

I'm fortunate, I'm in fulltime work and I'm reasonably well paid for what I do, you know so that I can afford these things [...] not everyone would have the option of being able to have a new kitchen fitted, and one that I could choose the design and layout, so that things were in a certain order for me...

Some participants (both higher and lower income) also mentioned being able to support environmental causes financially. Participant 08 also described how his stable financial circumstances despite unemployment (due to private health insurance cover before he became unwell) meant he had more time for environmental activities:

Participant 08 –...illness has in some ways been a blessing [...] because now I get money from my insurance company, and that supports me, so I get two thirds of my old salary, plus enough for a pension

[...]

Researcher – so I guess... less pressure financially helps you to have more space to – be well?

Participant 08 – yeah, I guess space to be ill, in the sense that I still have ... the symptoms, and that, but then paradoxically I actually have a bit more time than I did to deal with some environmental things...

Many participants, however, were in less positive financial circumstances. Having a low income, or losing benefits due to the current welfare reforms, had mixed impacts on environmental behaviours. A number of participants described how they would like to be able to use renewable technologies to generate energy and possibly save on bills in the longer term, but the initial financial outlay for these technologies was beyond their reach:

It's too expensive to buy solar panels and things like that [...] they're just not... making it affordable, you know, those that're unemployed you've got no chance of getting a solar panel, which is ridiculous really. (Participant 04)

Participant 20 also made the case that those least able to afford the initial cost of renewable energy technologies would most benefit from having them available. She pointed out that this might also decrease their reliance on state support:

...It's the people that are in the poorer sectors that actually could do with the renewable facilities and do with shared access to those [...] because usually they're the ones that have limited income anyway, and that are reliant upon a certain amount of state support, [...] long-term you'd be making... less demand on them if you had that access and that availability for renewable [...] because usually whoever comes into those blocks of flats or those schemes or wherever are people that would a) utilise it and use it to the full, and b) are not usually of an income where they could afford to install their own solar systems.

6.1.1 Extra costs

Many participants described extra costs they faced associated with either maximising accessibility or due to impairment effects such as increased sensitivity to the cold. Participant 07 described the extra energy cost associated

with maintaining a second fridge freezer to store food because he often found it difficult to get out of the house, particularly in bad weather. A few participants mentioned extra costs (both financial and environmental) associated with extra technology, for example having to use a tumble dryer; 'you tend to need more washers and dryers and equipment than you would do because you can't – I can't rely on being able to hang it up and hang it out to dry' (Participant 20). Participant 11 mentioned the prohibitive cost of insulating her home due to the property's age, and other participants described the financial barriers to adapting their gardens to be fully accessible to them:

It's having money I suppose to be able to re-plan it [...] I mean as a garden it doesn't look bad, but for my needs it's not good, but it's money, and by the time I've paid mortgage and kept up with the bills, there isn't the money to re-plan the garden.
(Participant 16)

That disabled people face extra costs has been highlighted by disability campaigners since the Disablement Income Group began researching the issue in the 1970s (Thompson et al., 1990). Disabled people's greater risks of fuel poverty in particular were recognised in the 2001 Fuel Poverty Strategy (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2001). During the fieldwork stage of this research, a report specifically focusing on issues of energy use and disability was also published. George and colleagues undertook a literature review and stakeholder interviews and highlighted a number of different 'essential energy needs' (George et al., 2013, p.6) that disabled people may experience. The experiences of participants in this research reflect these latter findings.

There were also a number of financial barriers to using more environmentally friendly transport modes. For those who had access to a car, the relative cost of bus travel was a key issue, particularly in relation to short journeys, as illustrated by Participant 12:

We live within less than 2 miles of Leeds city centre, and it's two pound ten to get into Leeds, or nearly four pound for a day rover, for such a tiny journey, that it's a lot of extra money...

As described earlier, national policy highlights free bus travel for disabled people as a key response to the issue of travel costs for disabled people (DfT, 2011a). This appears to be another example of failure of implementation. Cycling is another area where disabled people may face extra costs. Adapted

bikes are much more expensive than 'off the shelf' two-wheelers, as noted by Participant 10:

Cost is a big thing... if you're not getting a kind of traditional two wheel bike, and costs tend to rise rapidly for more specialised bikes and then... coupled with that is then keeping it secure.

This issue was also highlighted by the Inclusive Cycling Forum in evidence submitted to the House of Commons Transport Committee (2013) for a report on access to transport for disabled people. For another participant, although she was theoretically eligible to access a cycling scheme at her workplace, in practice this was not possible because it does not cover bikes other than two-wheelers:

One of the schemes that we have at work is about getting bikes [...] but there isn't even an opportunity to be on this bike scheme for the simple reason trikes aren't included. Even though the price of a trike is on average the same... of a pretty good bike that they're selling on these schemes.

This is a similar issue to one of the barriers to using electric cars, referred to briefly in the previous chapter. The extra costs of purchasing an electric or hybrid car through the Motability scheme compared to petrol or diesel cars means they are in practice inaccessible to many disabled people who might otherwise be interested in switching to more sustainable transport practices.

6.1.2 Effects of low incomes and financial instability

As illustrated by some of these examples, and also seen in the wider pro-environmental behaviours literature (for example DEFRA, 2008c; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002), finances are often a key consideration regarding pro-environmental behaviour. Other participants also highlighted the deterrent of a big financial outlay, even where they felt comfortable financially, regarding environmental decisions:

...if there was something that I wanted to do that was like out of my price range, or if something became available that I could do that would benefit the environment but I couldn't afford it, then I would think of my financial needs first.
(Participant 09)

This was a particular concern for those whose incomes were under threat from benefit reductions, or who felt at risk due to the more punitive benefits system

being rolled out by the current Coalition government. The uncertainty created could act as a barrier to action:

...I would like to access green energy, which you can do, but it's a lot more expensive and... because you're limited by your income, you feel that you're unable to commit yourself to that. Plus you see, as you know, benefits are constantly under review and you don't know really about the continuity of that as an income so you're not really sure about being able to afford that commitment to the green energy. (Participant 20)

Similarly, those whose benefits funded PA support mentioned that without this they would not be able to continue with many of their pro-environmental behaviours, and limited funding meant this was already an area in which they had to economise:

I've got limited hours of PAs and I've got lots of things to do so I buy ready meals most of the time. My PAs they come three times a week but so much else to do apart from cooking [...] but again my PAs wash the containers and recycle if possible. (Participant 15)

The other side of this equation is that where particular environmental behaviours also had a cost-saving element, this became important. This could be restrictive for those with lower incomes:

I try to watch the carbon footprint even at home, quite often I'll have the heating on rather than the electric on, and I've used blankets while sat in my chair or on my sofa and wear thick clothing and things like that, but there's not much I can do about that, it's very difficult. And because I work, financially as well I have to be very aware of that side of things as well, that affording heating is very hard. (Participant 18)

Conversely, for those who were able to invest, such as in home improvements, it was viewed as a bonus:

I've had all those things done, and I've had things like [home insulation] done, one because environmentally it's good, but also it's a cost saving to me, I've had a new boiler fitted, which is a more economical, environmentally friendly boiler, and I noticed quite a drop in my utility bills, well for gas not for electric, so that's why things like that are important to me. (Participant 14)

6.1.3 Pro-environmental behaviours as a 'side-effect'

A further aspect of financial circumstances was that, for some participants, a low income meant pro-environmental behaviours could be a side-effect of their

lifestyles. Participant 11, when deciding which of the environmental topics she wanted to discuss, mentioned that she was not choosing the 'buying' topic: '...cos I don't buy anything, cos I've got no money'. One participant described how she had become more aware of environmental issues as she had had to become more economical with her finances, as shown in this extract:

Researcher – what's changed for you, cos you sound like you talk about the past and you talk about now – is it just your awareness growing?

Participant 02 – ...yeah, more awareness of stuff and yeah, don't know, probably not having much money as well and trying to be economical that way I suppose that's had to be [inaudible] not having any money!

Participant 02 also suggested that, for many people, environmental concern could be superficial. Having more money could even lead to environmental damage:

Well I think some of our problem is we're a bit blasé about things – and a lot of people just can't be bothered if you get what I mean, you know they buy these big cars and stuff – I would if I had the money I'm terrible!

Other research into environmental impacts and household finances has demonstrated that households with higher incomes have the largest carbon footprints (a measure of CO₂ emissions produced by a person's lifestyle), on average (Kennedy et al., 2014). Therefore Participant 02's statement may be a realistic prediction.

6.1.4 The constraints of pro-environmental behaviours

A number of participants described specific behaviours around food as a result of financial circumstances. In most cases these carried a lower environmental impact. Participant 10 had recently experienced a cut to the benefits he relied on, affecting his diet:

My diet's become kind of a bit more vegan in a way, for having less money, so it's like a lot of Mexican vegetables. And yeah there's a lot more vegetables and a lot more root vegetables because of the... reduced amount of money to buy food.

For Participant 10, a low environmental impact diet fitted with his wider concerns and beliefs and so could be viewed in a somewhat positive way. For another

participant this was less positive, however, as becomes apparent in the following extract:

Participant 06 – I'm not a veggie unfortunately, wish I was sometimes. We do, I must admit we do eat a lot of processed stuff, which doesn't help

Researcher – when you say you wish you were veggie

Participant 06 – well... I eat meat, but I can also just have a pile of spuds and a load of veg and it's just as filling for me sometimes

Researcher – do you think it's an environmental choice that kind of thing or

Participant 06 – it's usually financial though, we haven't got any meat in to be quite honest.

Increased attention to the cost of food was therefore a constraint for some participants. As Participant 12 described, her careful attention to minimising waste is specifically something she currently does due to her limited budget.

When she had been employed, other things had taken priority:

...not wasting food, you know, looking really carefully 'right that needs eating up' or 'what can I make for that' and then put it in the freezer and not buying stuff that we're not gonna eat, which when I was working probably afford to do that and – was too busy so stuff did get wasted.

The difference between her behaviours when working and not working is also significant, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight. She also described other behaviours in terms of repairing appliances and clothes that were directly related to finances:

...and financially you know, it hits you, when if you're working you can go out and buy new clothes and stuff, whereas you've gotta think about it, that you know you can't just do that sort of thing when you're on a limited income.

In some of these situations, the pro-environmental activity and the need to save money could become a barrier to access in other aspects of a person's life.

Participant 13 described this when discussing the pros and cons of his financial situation and his environmental impact:

[my financial situation] limits my environmental impact to some extent, I mean I couldn't run a car, even if I wanted to, I could not afford to, I can't do conspicuous consumption [...] so yeah to an extent it limits my ability to destroy the environment, I suppose, but then it also limits my ability to campaign on it and also to make positive change.

Participant 10 also experienced this tension. For him, the necessity to save money meant lifestyle changes that reduced his environmental impact. These changes left a larger impact on his health, however, and limited his ability to act on other aspects of his environmentalism:

...I've always thought to... try and reduce my environmental impact but things sort of get in the way when you're quite busy, but yeah it's become... a bit of an imposition – financial constraints but it's... a bit strange in that well if you don't have money then... you reduce your consumption, that's the only thing you can do. So yeah... I mean I suppose it's weirdly kind of slightly positive from that point of view, but if it means that you can't do things that you wanna do...

Participant 10 identifies the 'weirdly positive' impact on the environment from his current financial circumstances (having benefits taken away) because reducing consumption is 'the only thing you can do'. This is not necessarily the most *sustainable* course of action, however (in the sense of maintaining his health and ability to engage in other projects). This participant manages long-term physical and mental health conditions alongside his environmental concern. Some of the less pro-environmental things he does (for example, taking the bus rather than walking, buying convenience food rather than cooking from scratch) actually *create* access; facilitating other behaviours such as his research and activism around sustainable transport:

...there's times when it's just really, really helpful to just have one thing or other... off your mind so yeah, getting the bus into town or home and that means I've got more energy – so having less energy to do things because you're having to make those compromises is an issue.

Both Participants 10 and 08 discuss this matter of impact – in terms of lifestyles and carbon footprints – on a global scale. Both talked about their own lives in a global context and identified that although their lifestyles may be green in comparison to the rest of the UK, they are still using a larger share of resources than is equitable on a planetary scale (and therefore fit Dobson's ecological citizen criteria, described in Chapter Three section 3.2.2):

... I think I'm probably [...] in the one percent globally, and I think I could be middle class here, so I probably have much much more environmental impact... but then you think... see if I write to David Cameron, and then something – a slight change happens, and then... they're able to save 20000 tonnes of CO2... Does that account on my environmental account? Can I

be restorative environmentally? And yeah and then I think... that's what the environmental protest leaders – I think that's how they morally justify flying to different places to environmental meetings and things. (Participant 08)

Participant 08 specifically refers to his activism (in terms of writing letters to the prime minister about aspects of sustainable development policy) and considers whether it might balance out other aspects of his environmental impact. He does not come to a conclusion for himself but suggests this is how other environmentalists might justify carbon-intensive lifestyles.

This section has described the financial barriers participants faced to pro-environmental behaviours, but also highlighted the contradictory facilitating and constraining aspects of both high and low incomes. It is well-established that disabled people in the UK are at higher risk of being on low incomes and experiencing poverty (see for example DWP, 2013) but equally, as already discussed, the disabled population is diverse. It is also well-established that people on lower incomes tend to have smaller environmental impacts – as measured by carbon footprint. This is despite the ability of those on higher incomes to invest in costly pro-environmental technologies such as retrofitting and micro-generation (see for example Kennedy et al., 2014; Barr et al., 2011b).

From a purely frugal environmental perspective, therefore, it may be seen as a positive thing that the participants on lower incomes or experiencing benefit cuts were also participating in more pro-environmental behaviours. The experiences of Participants 10 and 13 in terms of reduced accessibility, however, provide part of the reason why this should be rejected. Similarly, in the following account, Participant 17 described in detail the problems experienced by her and her neighbours, living in an economically-disadvantaged area of the city. Key Informant 01's account, mentioned earlier, also highlighted the link between place and health. For Participant 17, the negative effects of her local environment have exacerbated the health issues she experienced, which in turn have limited her opportunities to contribute:

It's like everything is just weighed against you, because health means that you can't work, but then means that you're on a low income, that then means you can only live somewhere shitty, that then means your health never gets better.

This hints at financial barriers to both living in a good environment and being able to live sustainably, both in terms of health and environmental impact. It also points to a more concrete conception of 'environment' as described when talking about participants' access to the built and natural environments (discussed in the previous chapter). This aspect of the environment therefore seems important to address, as well as wider 'global' environmental concerns.

6.2 Social interactions

Social barriers encompass those that occur in the context of interactions between the participants and non-disabled others. In some cases, however, the actions of others also facilitated pro-environmental behaviours. Social interactions have added significance since, due to disability discrimination legislation, most public spaces now have minimum accessibility features (such as a step-free entrance and wheelchair accessible bathroom). Accessible adaptations are also more commonly available, giving the appearance of objective accessibility. As will be shown, however, a technically accessible space does not guarantee a disabled person will be able to use it. For example, access may also be contingent on a 'gatekeeper' – such as an official or service provider. Subjective assessments of accessibility are therefore important to highlight whether or not a space is actually usable. This section focuses first on general social barriers and facilitators in relation to sustainable lifestyles, and then considers specific social factors in relation to engaging with the environmental movement.

6.2.1 Social interactions

Some participants experienced negative interactions with other passengers when using public transport which presented barriers to using it. On buses in particular, other passengers and drivers could cause substantial barriers. Participants with 'hidden', or less visible, impairments faced difficulties in terms of recognition. Buggies were also a key source of the problem for some participants:

I have never seen a wheelchair user on the bus, I've taken my wheelchair on the bus once, it was quite scary, the driver was horrible and I felt quite vulnerable, no there's just other people, and if a buggy's on, they don't fold their buggies up, and put the child on their lap, they expect you to not take the bus.
(Participant 05)

Participant 18 described experiencing negative reactions from others when acting assertively to receive appropriate access on public transport (in her case mainly trains):

You're having to be all stroppy, so once again it's a 'blooming disabled people are always bad tempered' – but it's because you've only got so much energy, and you're having to expend that energy on getting from A to B, and then there's something else there, and it's not like a choice I have.

Participant 20 described an encounter she had when attempting to recycle items at a local authority-run Household Waste Sorting Site. She had been using the site unaided when a staff member came and tried to direct her with unhelpful instructions. He ended up taking the items off her to recycle when she felt she could have dealt with them herself if he had not intervened. She described how this had impacted her:

I felt it was a bit disappointing, cos I felt that you didn't fit – a) you weren't able to carry it through, b) you weren't very welcome there, and also you didn't feel as though you're doing the right thing, you felt as if you were in the way.

Similarly, Participant 19 had experienced assistance with packing shopping at the supermarket checkout that meant he always ended up with far more plastic bags than he needed. Because he felt this was only done with good intentions, however, he did not want to say anything because he did not want to be perceived as rude:

...they kind of see my disability and they kind of don't put enough stuff in the bags... you end up using more bags than you probably should do, cos they're thinking, 'I don't wanna make em too heavy'. Never mind the fact that when I get back to the flat I just stick all of em in an IKEA bag and carry about four or five of em at a time anyway!

A few participants described social barriers in the home. Other family or household members could affect their pro-environmental behaviours. Some described unsuccessful attempts to persuade family members to turn off lights or heating, or take showers rather than baths. Similarly, Participant 03

described how his mother controlled the family's waste disposal and did not recycle, although he would have liked to do this:

Participant 03 – ...we've got a green bin, but most of it's up here, cos mum insists on putting it in a black bag [...] it's my mum and dad's

Researcher – they don't recycle

Participant 03 – my dad's tries to recycle but, it gets pushed out by my mum

Researcher – ok so it ends up in the waste bin

Participant 03 – yeah

Researcher – I mean if it was up to you would you recycle?

Participant 03 – yeah

Researcher – if you could use the green bin

Participant 03 – yeah, yeah if they showed me what to do with it

Living with non-disabled family members could affect eligibility for assisted bin collections (discussed further in Chapter Seven). In other cases, however, support from family members also enabled pro-environmental behaviours such as putting out recycling bins, or taking on the more physical aspects of gardening tasks:

We both do different bits of garden, I tend the beds more, because that's easier for me, you know that I can just sit there on my little cushion stool and I don't have to move an awful lot [...] my partner [name] he'll do some of the heavy stuff – pruning apple trees and cutting grass and the more heavy stuff and watering hanging baskets that I can't reach and all that side of it.
(Participant 14)

Support from family members (or other householders) in terms of giving lifts was also significant for the mobility of some participants. In Participant 01's case this was described as facilitative in terms of doing joint shopping trips with reusable bags: 'when I've lived with other people in the past, we've taken like the big bags – the bags for life, so you're reusing the same one every time'. This support can be characterised as an experience of interdependence. This is a shared human experience, but may be more visible in the life of a disabled person (Leipoldt, 2006).

A number of participants discussed attitudes towards disabled people from non-disabled people more generally. Some mentioned misconceptions and misunderstandings, for example around what a Blue Badge meant or entitled a person to. A few talked about disabled people being seen as fraudulent if doing something 'unexpected', for example standing up out of a wheelchair.

Participant 16 felt that non-disabled people's attitudes towards disabled people

had changed over recent years. She used the 2012 Paralympics as an example of both positive and negative changes:

People's attitudes have changed... I mean like the Olympics was a good thing, cos it showed what disabled people could do, but I think it's also left a lot of non-disabled people feeling, that well if they can do that [...] they don't put it on equal terms of a non-disabled athlete winning a gold medal [...] they just relate it well, you know if they can do it, why can't you?

6.2.2 Social interactions and the environmental movement context

These difficulties also extended to interactions with people 'within' the environmental movement, for example fellow participants in specific activities. Many of the issues in these contexts were raised by only a few participants, reflecting the small profile of public environmental activism. Alternatively this may be due to exclusion which can prevent disabled people successfully engaging with the environmental movement. Similarly, the barriers faced in daily life might leave little energy or time for concern or engagement with wider issues such as environmental or political concerns:

People only have a certain capacity for taking on issues, whether disabled or not and you know – also struggling for financial and physical resources at the moment, they're limited and if one concern takes more of a resource, be it people's energy and head space, or be it financial or other resources then perhaps other things slip.
(Participant 13)

This has also been pointed out in other research. As Finkelstein (quoted by Horsler, 2003, p.56) put it, 'Most disabled people are struggling to survive day by day. You can't think about world capitalism if you can't get out of the house.' The rich descriptions given by these few participants who had experience with environmental organisations, however, suggest issues that need to be addressed.

When discussing the environmental movement context, it is important to consider both specific spaces and events and also the 'cultural and political space... produced by [environmental] groups and networks' (Horton, 2006a, p.129) – the environmental 'milieu' of organisations, movement and politics. The environmental movement is important because it is where much civic environmental action occurs. Therefore it may be reasonably expected to be a key site of engagement (or otherwise) with the wider public. If the

information/visions on offer are ableist or exclusive, then not only do they prevent people getting involved, but they may also deter further engagement. This potentially limits a wider consideration of environmental issues from a more diverse cross-section of society.

The environmental movement is heterogeneous, however (Schlembach, 2011). Rootes (2012) suggests it can be broadly characterised into three groups; firstly, an older, more established set of environmental NGOs who focus on traditional conservation issues and are generally well-funded (for example RSPB or the National Trust). Secondly, there are smaller, campaign-focused NGOs (such as Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace). Thirdly there are also newer grassroots-focused networks that often have the most radical or counter-cultural views, for example Earthfirst, Climate Camp, or most recently Reclaim the Power (Rootes, 2012). Participants in this research had experience of each of these three types of organisations, as well as, in some cases, more informal 'intentional communities' (Sargisson, 2009). However ableism and disablism, or the anticipation of these, was a common feature of engagement with the groups. To briefly recap, disablism is used in this research to refer to direct discrimination disabled people face, while ableism implies assumptions of an 'able-bodied' norm. It is acknowledged, however, that the two cannot always be separated out as they are both concerned with exclusion.

Some positive experiences of inclusion were described, but it is interesting that all the environmental groups encountered by participants to some extent paralleled negative experiences in more mainstream settings. A well-known criticism of the environmental movement (in the UK and beyond) is the tendency for participants to be white, middle class, and male (e.g. MacGregor, 2006). It may be possible to add to this list 'predominantly non-disabled' also. These characteristics mirror those of the most privileged in mainstream society and contribute to the problems faced by the disabled participants in this research. This links back to the consideration of embodiment and the assumptions made about 'normal' embodiments by those with the power to design and shape spaces (as discussed in Chapter Three sections 4.3.4-5).

In this research, participants' experience of 'public' involvement – the traditional domain of citizenship – with environmental activities included supporting organisations or taking part in environmental campaigns, as well as other

interactions with the environmental movement. Some had also experienced barriers to this involvement, however. Physical barriers (described Chapter Five) included inaccessible venues or spaces, inaccessible information about organisations or a lack of information about their accessibility, and physical access to specific events, for example protest marches/camps. For some who had experienced increasing impairment, their profile of engagement had either decreased or shifted towards disability activism. Similarly, other changes of circumstance – such as moving home – contributed to changing engagement for other participants. Some discussed the increasing isolation from environmental groups that they had experienced with either acquired or increasing impairment. There is a relevant parallel here in the physical and social isolation of disabled people from public life more widely. This issue was also mentioned by other participants in relation to welfare cuts and reflected in other accounts of the continuing cuts affecting disabled people in the UK (e.g. Cross, 2013).

A number of participants were currently members/supporters of environmental groups, from large national organisations such as Sustrans and RSPB, to local campaigning, conservation or community groups. Some participants were recruited for this research project through a local conservation group and often described positive experiences of their involvement. For Participant 04, the group provided a welcome contrast to the barriers he experienced at home: 'that's why I like coming here, cos it feels like very purposeful, you know'. However, among the experiences of participants in this research, the conservation group seemed to be the exception rather than the rule for inclusion (and even at this project one participant pointed out that the physical access was not particularly suitable for wheelchair users).

6.2.2.1 Ableist discourses

Implicit ableism in messaging or other materials was a particular social factor discussed. Participant 13 described his previous involvement with a national cycling campaign. Although overall this seemed positive, his description of the campaign messaging is significant: 'I had a sign that said "four wheels good", you know they had a slogan "two wheels good four wheels bad"'. The campaign slogan, while probably intended to refer to the difference between bikes and

cars, also implicitly groups wheelchair users in the 'bad' group. Participant 13's sign (as a wheelchair user taking part alongside cyclists) can be seen as a gentle criticism of this simplistic binary and/or a call for recognition.

Participant 18 also engaged in resistance to ableist environmental messages at her workplace, what she termed 'guerrilla warfare'. She described her experiences with her workplace's yearly travel survey, which asks about how employees get to work and measures environmental impact:

Every year, I complete it, and of course I come out at the end of it looking like a very selfish person, but there's an 'any other comments' box, I always put in the comments box 'as a disabled person I do not have a choice over this, why can't you put a question in here that basically sort of says if you're disabled, what would help, how could we help you become more environmentally friendly' [...] I send it back, I send an email... and I always get a 'thank you very much, we really value your comments, yes we will look into putting this in next year' – next year comes around, and it's not there... Somebody did say to me at work, cos when the most recent one came out earlier this year, and, I went 'oh for goodness sake, *still* no disabled question!' and he said 'well why do you bother?' and I said 'because you've gotta keep bothering'.

Like Participant 13's experience with the cycling group, above, this is a critique of the implied message but also an explicit call for recognition. This links back to the discussion in Chapter Three describing recognition as a key aspect of environmental justice as well as distribution and participation. These experiences reinforce the argument in Chapter Three that misrecognition is a potentially significant issue of environmental injustice faced by disabled people. Relatedly, Participant 18 felt that the extra barriers she faced as a disabled person needed to be more acknowledged when talking about environmental behaviours:

I just feel that the literature should acknowledge that there is not choice – that you're not being a greedy carbon person by choice... and just a simple line, a simple statement; 'by the way we do acknowledge that if you are disabled you will be limited in the public transport you could use', 'we do acknowledge that as a disabled person you will maybe have to use more heating'.

The frustration implicit in Participant 18's account is mirrored in Key Informant 01's description of the attitudes of some of the environmentalists she has come across in her activism:

I get quite frustrated by a lot of rather simplistic stuff in various environment circles which is very much... the back-to-the-land types that everyone can go on to have their own allotment and live on that and that's all you really need, and I have to say no, actually I need really complicated medication, which at the moment is produced by big multinationals and you can't make it – and no just eating lots of potatoes and homeopathy is not the substitute for this. So I get quite frustrated by that sometimes, the whole idea that natural is good, unnatural is bad, so basically you write off anyone who needs quote unquote 'unnatural' support to live.

This is another example of a simplistic, implicitly ableist message or discourse from some sections of the environmental movement which elides the experiences of disabled people. The implication here is that individualism and self-sufficiency are desirable goals – a valorisation of neoliberal ableist goals also (Goodley, 2014). This extract also shows how Key Informant 01's experience disrupts the binary that has been established, in a similar way to Participant 13's 'four wheels good' sign. Ableism in environmental messaging has similarly been noted in other environmental contexts. Withers (2012), a Canadian disability scholar-activist, notes examples such as campaigns which highlight 'birth defects' as a central problem of environmental damage – implying that impairment can only be negative and should be eliminated.

Bhakta's (2013) research, described in Chapter One (section 1.6) is also relevant here. As a disabled researcher with non-disabled residents/visitors of sustainable communities she also encountered various aspects of ableism. In particular she explored the potential contribution of disabled people to the communities. She found that participants tended to make assumptions about what disabled people could and could not – or should not – do, such as being exempted from particular tasks or directed towards office work, rather than offering flexibility and choice. This is another example of disabled people's experiences being missed or ignored.

6.2.2.2 Judgemental environmentalism

'Ecodisablism', described in Chapter One, was one disabled environmentalist's way of describing her feelings of failure as she applied ableist binary environmental messages to criticise herself as she engaged in behaviours which maximised accessibility but had large environmental impacts

(disabledmedic, 2012). This is an example of what might be described as judgemental environmentalism; in this case, internalised. A few participants in this research had experienced or anticipated judgemental attitudes about unsustainable aspects of their lifestyles from non-disabled others. Attitudes of others also presented barriers to involvement with voluntary or campaigning environmental organisations: 'the group while I was at university [...] it wasn't very accommodating of disability issues' (Participant 15). Some participants described fearing stigma if they revealed 'hidden' impairments. Participant 20 felt that her participation in a climate march would be viewed by others as tokenistic rather than as her acting autonomously:

What tends to happen is that disabled people are an add-on [...] there would be a lot of people who'd view [her potential participation] as being a tokenism... they'd say 'oh well that person's there as a token symbolising that' rather than see you as being actually wanting, as a disabled person, to see the whole aspect of your life being linked to the environment as well.

This, for Participant 20, was an anticipated experience as opposed to one she had directly experienced in this context. However, it echoes the experience described by DPAC members attending a protest march against welfare cuts in the UK recently. This was organised by a non-disability specific group, the People's Assembly (DPAC, 2014; vsjustice, 2014). It appears that DPAC were not involved in the planning of the march, which allocated their participants to a particular 'block' based on disability status. DPAC pointed out in a statement to the People's Assembly organisers that 'Nobody would dream of proposing a block of Black and Minority Ethnic people flanked by white blocks, so why are disabled people to be herded together?' (DPAC, 2014, no pagination). This is also a potential incident of tokenism.

Returning to this research, Participant 11 described her and her partner's anticipation of judgement from the environmental community. They had investigated the possibility of moving into an intentional community cohousing project. For a variety of reasons they eventually decided not to go ahead with this, but part of this was what she described as 'the stereotype of the kind of people who would live there'. Explaining this further, she went on:

...just that people would be very evangelically, we must be 'greener-than-thou'... everything we do must be sustainable and we must make our own yoghurt and all of that stuff [...] I thought it would prompt us maybe to live in a more environmentally friendly

way than we do, and I do think that we probably do use the car a bit too much, and it would help us to remember not to, and – yeah we get lazy. But I get what [partner] means about it can be difficult to live if you felt like people are judging you, and also I guess with my issues with energy, sometimes realistically the only way I have to get about is to use the car, and I don't necessarily want to go into justifying that to people, who live two doors away from me but I don't really know them.

Participant 11 is describing both potential positives and negatives here. For her, there is a positive aspect of 'prompting' or encouragement for sustainable behaviours. She envisages a negative of having to justify additional car use, however, and the language of 'greener-than-thou' is evocative of the idea that in this kind of community environmentalism would be linked to status. Similarly, Participant 10, although he felt that generally environmental messages that he encountered were inclusive, described a particular 'type' of environmentalist that could be exclusive:

There's a contingent... who are kind of very physically active young people which it's sometimes very difficult to keep up with. Particularly, there's a lot of people who cycle, who are very much into like physical fitness and all of that and have this kind of air of superiority about them because they're moving around on their own power and whether – to some extent particularly the cycling culture is quite exclusionary to people with disabilities.

Participant 13 however, who had been an activist in relation to both the environment and disability issues, suggested similar issues might be experienced within both movements: 'there is clique-iness, and holier than thou attitudes, and informal hierarchies in supposedly flat hierarchical structures, in both sets'.

Empirical research in the wider academic literature also to some extent supports concerns around judgemental or exclusive attitudes. Hards (2013), for example, described competitiveness between some of her environmentalist participants. She noted that different environmental behaviours can – in certain contexts – be status-enhancing or stigmatising. Both she and Horton (2003) discuss the concept of 'green distinction'. Horton describes this as 'the markings of a green identity... the embodied performance of appropriate green identity' (Horton, 2003, p.64), using Bourdieusian-inspired ideas about 'green capital' as a positional good in a similar way to social or cultural capitals. This applies to the status-enhancing conspicuous energy conservation or 'green' consumption as opposed to more stigmatised environmental behaviours – for example

having a cold house or leaving laundry to dry around the house (as opposed to using a tumble dryer), as described by Hards (2013).

Participants 10 and 11 above, with descriptions like ‘greener-than-thou’ and ‘air of superiority’, both seem to be describing either an experience or an expectation of this style of competitive or judgemental environmentalism from some – but not all – areas of the environmental movement. Hards, perhaps unintentionally, also makes a further interesting observation. She notes that, although some energy practices are stigmatised, this stigma is ‘not necessarily as severe or harmful as it can be [around] disability or race’ (Hards, 2013, p.441). This begs the question – what if stigmatised energy practices are undertaken by those with one or more of these already stigmatised identities? This consideration may well also be extended to the implicit stigmatisation of non-environmental energy practices in environmentalist contexts.

6.2.2.3 Opportunities and risks

As indicated by these accounts, there are a number of unhelpful attitudes demonstrated by some environmentalists which implicitly exclude disabled people. Disabled people’s perspectives, however, also have the potential to problematise the simplistic binaries and ableist assumptions that exist in the environmental movement and discourses. This can create both risk and opportunity for disabled people engaging with environmentalism. The opportunity is straightforward: if disabled people’s experiences are accepted and recognised then there is potential for an extension and reconsideration of the terms of debate, for learning and for inclusion. Participant 13’s positive experiences with the camp he attended (described in Chapter Five section 5.2.2) are arguably an example of this in action. There is a related issue here. As Participant 13 described, many historic environmental activists have since developed impairments as a direct result of their behaviours:

Living in trees, in all weathers is not good for your health... neither is the confrontation that’s involved good for your mental health, and you find that there’s a generation of people now who were in their teens and twenties maybe during the big road protest movement, the big radical wakeup, the CND days etcetera [...] that have now got arthritis and joint problems as a result, or have got mental health difficulties of varying types and severities as a result of what they experienced basically.

As a result of this, and the visibility of Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN), Participant 13 felt there had been some positive improvements:

There was to an extent an awakening amongst the environmentalist movement that disabled people could sometimes be useful allies, but as to whether that's come to full fruition, probably not. But I did see it happening to an extent.

There may also be risks, however. If this kind of 'awakening' does not occur, then the kinds of judgemental environmentalism described earlier may result. Key Informant 01 described her own experience of this. As a person who takes various medications to control her mental health condition, she has experienced both pressures to stop taking her medication, and censure and threats for some of her views on her own situation:

Some days I think I'm just making it up and I should stop taking all my meds ... you know there are already quite a lot of pressures to do that sort of thing, and it's an annoying thing ... almost it can be a barrier to me participating in a lot of environmental stuff because people go on about like how homeopathy and crystals and everything has cured them, and how it's really good. I think it's almost easier to say that that stuff cures mental illness, because you can say that crystals and dolphins cure a broken leg and you can see it's still broken [...] There have been times when I just sort of stopped being involved in various environmental groups because of this, and it's also a bit of a barrier because it means I have some very definite views about animal experimentation, that I think it's necessary to develop better meds [...] this puts me at odds with a lot of people, particularly at the more radical climate camp-y edge of the environmental movement, I've been threatened with being punched for saying things like that, and generally called a murderer and all sorts, so it is something I find quite difficult [...]

That's the thing I get in a lot of arguments about, and it's really frustrating because it stops me being as open as I'd like about having a mental illness because I don't expect to get so much stick actually, for having a mental illness. [...] but there will always be someone who wants to shout at me for not using homeopathy and for using medications which are tested on animals and in gelatine capsules...

Disabled people facing difficulties when engaging in non-disability-focused activism has been highlighted by other researchers also. Horsler (2003), in his MA research, examined the experiences of disabled people engaging with the wider anti-capitalist movement. This has some cross-over interests with the environmental movement, as described in the account of Key Informant 01. His participants raised the issue that disability campaigns can be viewed negatively by those without a good understanding of disability issues, as they may be

viewed as working against the wider group's aims. McKay (1998) in his description of 1990s British activism also noted failed attempts at inclusion of disability – for example emphasizing the importance of including groups such as the Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN), and then only providing (inaccessible) tube directions to the 'secret location' of a meeting. Similarly, Chouinard (1999) has described the experiences of disabled women attempting to gain recognition in the context of a wider feminist movement in Canada in the 1980s-90s. These women found that as disabled women they faced exclusion from feminist organising, while as women they faced sexism within disability activism. Part of their resistance included creating spaces (and an organisation) specifically for disabled women, as well as establishing their voices within feminist and disability groups. It is interesting to consider the parallels with this and the experiences of participants recruited from the conservation group which had been specifically designed for disabled participants and tended to be described positively by those participants.

There is one further issue relating to social factors to describe. A specific experience was described independently by two participants and highlighted by them both as significant in terms of their experiences with the environmental movement. Both had been members of activist groups which were infiltrated by undercover police officers, in a wider campaign during the 1990s- 2000s to monitor so-called 'British subversives' (Lewis and Evans, 2013, p.1; EHRC, 2012b). The subsequent revelation of this has been hard to come to terms with for all involved, but for these two participants it represented a specific issue. Both live with long-term mental health conditions, of which one symptom is paranoia. After the revelations of police infiltration, both withdrew from their activism. They experienced difficulties separating symptoms of paranoia from real concern. For one participant, her encounter with undercover police was also dismissed as a symptom of paranoia by mental health professionals. For both participants this led to isolation and problems with trust, exacerbated by their mental health symptoms. This is an example of disabled people experiencing increased negative effects related to an environmental issue. Although the fault of the police in this instance rather than fellow environmental campaigners, it demonstrates the additional impact on disabled people and is potentially an issue of justice. This example is included both to demonstrate another angle in

terms of the interactions between disability equality and sustainability, and because of its significance to the participants who shared these accounts. While it raises potential questions for further research, however, it is only tenuously related to the central issues raised in this thesis and so the discussion now returns to these.

6.2.2.4 Potential implications of ableism in the environmental movement

Returning to Key Informant 01's experiences, the lack of understanding she describes (which also relates to the lack of recognition Participant 18 talked about earlier) is problematic for a number of reasons. First and most obviously, these experiences create a hostile environment which can exclude and/or deter people from involvement. Secondly, a lack of understanding or recognition may have real impact on policymaking. Some of the recommendations being made to policy makers by influential academic research groups are explicitly ableist – if not intentionally so – because disability is ignored or missed. For example, Pooley and colleagues (2011) conducted a UK research council-funded study into walking and cycling. There was little mention of any consideration of disability issues in the report, and there were implications that only non-disabled people took part – with a few mentions of care for older relatives restricting the mobility of its participants. It is one of the final summations of advice, however, that demonstrates the most explicit ableism:

In short, it is necessary to make travel by car for short trips in urban areas more difficult and, most crucial, *make it feel abnormal and exceptional*. In contrast, policies have to be put in place that make walking and cycling easy, safe, comfortable, and accepted as the *normal and obvious* way of moving around urban areas for most people... There will remain journeys for which a car is necessary, and individuals who due to poor health or infirmity cannot walk or cycle. But for much of the population switching to more sustainable forms of transport for many journeys is entirely feasible... (Pooley and colleagues, 2011, p.17, emphasis added)

Although acknowledging the existence of those who may still need to rely on cars, there is no consideration that their recommendation will make the actions of these individuals 'more difficult... abnormal and exceptional' – and thus potentially lead to further discrimination and exclusion.

Yet more concerning however, some of the ableist environmental perspectives

that exist have more extreme connotations, such as ideas of overpopulation and associated population reduction scenarios (as introduced in Chapter Three section 3.3.2). These touch on fundamental debates such as disabled people's right to life. Participant 13 raised this issue when talking about the place of disabled people in a more environmentally sustainable society:

It's always disabled people first against the wall ... I think we are starting to see that. There's less resources around, people's quality of life is having to fall a bit and who is suffering the most? The dispossessed asylum seekers, disabled people, people in council sink estates... and the Nazi government, disabled people were the first that they killed before anybody else... after a media portrayal of them as being resource sinks [...] it feels tenuous, the amount of support we've got, as it is, which is inadequate and leaves most if not all disabled people with a quality of life which is just unconscionable, I mean even as it is it's bloody precarious, and as soon as any change is made, you know you run the pronounced possibility that things'll get even worse.

Participant 13 highlights current concerns about mainstream media and political rhetoric around disabled people – as did other participants – and makes links back to the situation of disabled people in Germany in the 1940s. He also projects this forward to a situation that is environmentally sustainable. He describes this as one where the quality of life of people living in the UK would be significantly affected because of its disproportionate environmental impact and the need to reduce this. The issue of increasing negative rhetoric has also been examined and demonstrated by Briant and colleagues (2011, 2013). Barnes (2012) has also suggested that the situation for disabled people may well worsen before it improves – and he is not fully confident that there will be improvement.

Ableist views and rhetoric are not the only issue, however. Key Informant 03, who had experience of working in the environmental sector, described instances of active discrimination when applying for jobs with environmental organisations:

I would love to have a career in the environmental sector fulltime [...] but I'm finding a lot of barriers around that, I went for an interview... two years ago, with [another organisation], and I did the interview no problem, I had to do two written papers, I did the first one absolutely fine, however the second half of the written paper was [not accessible to her] so because I wasn't able to complete the paper I wasn't able to complete my interview and compete for the job [...] And I applied twice now for an environmental apprenticeship with another large environmental organisation and had the same types of barriers.

As she pointed out, if there are not disabled people working in the sector then it is difficult to see how meaningful change could occur:

...unless we can get disabled people working and integrating in the core fabric of the environmental sector, we're not gonna be able to make these connections and the world is not gonna see how environmental justice and inclusion is linked so closely to disability equality and inclusion...

Again this returns to the discussion of the potential contribution of disabled people and disability studies to the environmental movement. There are also further implications here if, as suggested by this participant, the movement cannot make connections between environmental justice and disability equality because it lacks the expertise and lived experiences of disabled members. This points to the risk that inaccessible physical and social environments will be reproduced and the push for environmental sustainability would continue potentially at the expense of social sustainability. Alternatively, to use Vallance and colleagues' (2011) definition (discussed in Chapter One section 1.2), the best type of social sustainability that might be achieved is maintenance social sustainability – reproducing the current (disabling) social order.

Although the scenario here seems bleak, there is also reason to hope that positive change is occurring, or could be possible if groups and organisations could be exposed to disability equality information and training. Participant 13's extensive interactions with environmental groups indicates the potential for good practice, as do the experiences of the participants in Focus Group One who were attending a conservation group organised specifically for disabled participants. Similarly, some of the academic literature has explored some of the new environmental groups that have emerged in the last decade. Schlembach (2011) for example, investigated the experiences of one campaign group and noted that they faced conflicts between their commitment to collective solutions and the more individualistic, lifestyle-choices focus of other groups. Groups like the former are likely to be more inclusive than the latter in the terms discussed in this section. Finally, understanding 'the environmental activist space as essentially contested' (Schlembach, 2011, p.211) also leaves room for the prospect of more inclusive solutions.

6.3 Summary

This chapter has considered financial and social factors regarding disabled people's access to sustainable lifestyles in depth. It indicated that diversity among participants in terms of income can at times both enable and constrain action. Finances, in effect, 'create' accessibility in some circumstances. The second half of the chapter focused on the environmental movement context as a key example from some participants of where social factors play a significant role. It considered the impacts of ableism, both for these participants and potentially for other disabled people's engagement with the movement. This again indicates problems disabled people face where disability equality is not a concern of sustainability.

Both this chapter and the previous chapter have engaged with an understanding of barriers that fits with wider disability studies theorising, and also fits broadly within a pro-environmental behaviours-style approach to research. Participants' reflections on their experiences and implications for environmental citizenship will be returned to in Chapter Eight. The next chapter, however, changes perspective to examine the implications of these research findings for a social practice approach to sustainability.

7 A Social Practice Approach

This chapter involves a change of focus to consider a social practice approach to the research data. This allows a detailed exploration of sustainable activities rather than only focusing on barriers. Social practice theories enable an exploration of how particular activities become routinised – but also how they might be altered. A social practice approach points out how different practices are embedded in their contexts – including policy contexts – and impacted on by other practices. Therefore changing just one aspect might have unexpected results.

This research initially aimed to explore disabling barriers, so participants' accounts have so far been considered by barrier type. These barriers are similar to more general 'external factors' described in the pro-environmental behaviours literature. This approach assumes that barriers are 'obstacles that seem to prevent people from acting according to their (green) beliefs' (Shove et al., 2012, p.142). Externally imposed barriers, specifically material and/or social, and regardless of any individual's particular beliefs, can limit disabled people's access to sustainable lifestyles. It is important to highlight these barriers because of the widespread lack of awareness of these issues among (predominantly) non-disabled environmentalists and policy makers.

Just as the removal of disabling barriers is not enough to create an equal society, however, having the potential for individual action is also not enough to transition to a more sustainable society. Campbell (2008a) distinguishes between an integrative disablism and a transformative ableism – the former considering barriers excluding disabled people from current society, while the latter questions the fundamental suitability of existing societal relations – i.e. disability is not the only source of inequality. Similarly, highlighting barriers within an individualistic paradigm is not enough because it does not go beyond the fundamental assumption that the individual needs to act. This in turn reinforces the neoliberal paradigm and minimises the role of government and business. Therefore, while these barriers need to be removed, we should also

consider how disabled people can be included in transitions towards a more sustainable society that occur at a level beyond the individual.

Recalling the discussion in Chapters Three and Four, pro-environmental behaviours approaches take the individual as the unit of analysis while a social practice perspective focuses on the practice. Rather than considering the features of individuals (and their contexts) as central factors, the focus is on how particular practices (such as travel or recycling) have evolved and how they might continue to evolve or be transformed in ways that are more or less sustainable. Situating the data from this research within a practice perspective provides an opportunity to consider its usefulness for promoting disabled people's inclusion in sustainable societies beyond an individual perspective. While the previous chapters demonstrated how a consideration of barriers can also take social understandings of disability into account, this has not been the case in much previous pro-environmental behaviours research. The focus on individuals therefore risks an individualised understanding of disability. By contrast, social practice approaches specifically move away from the individual which means that – if disability is considered – a social understanding has a better fit.

Social practice theorists engaging with sustainable practices and transitions to date, however, have underemphasised issues of inequality and diversity. Although this has been recognised by some authors, it is often not problematised. For example, Shove and colleagues focus on trajectories of practice 'beyond specific moments of integration' (Shove et al., 2012, p.11). This is despite others such as Warde noting the multiplicity of ways a particular practice can be performed by different practitioners: 'social practices do not present uniform planes upon which agents participate in identical ways' (Warde, 2005, p.138). It is in the 'specific moments of integration' where these different performances are made visible. Where this differentiation is not critically discussed, there is the risk of unintentionally perpetuating social exclusion.

Although these social practice theorists use terms of sustainability, environmental sustainability appears to be their primary aim (see for example Spurling et al., 2013). Also, issues of inequality and diversity are more than just minority concerns. Gender inequality, for example, has implications for over 50% of the human population. Experience of disability is becoming increasingly

likely with ageing populations and potentially directly impacts one fifth of the UK population (DWP, 2013). Understanding the broad trajectory of a practice is undeniably useful. However, this needs to be considered in conjunction with the diversity of practitioners, the different ways a particular practice can be carried out, and the implications for social positioning.

Shove and colleagues' work has potential for understanding the practical links between disability equality and sustainability in everyday life, hence its inclusion in this research. Considering the research data from a social practice perspective means taking a more theoretical, systematic approach and thinking in depth about specific practices and the disabling or enabling aspects embedded within them. This chapter demonstrates how accessible practices and environmentally sustainable practices interact and compete. By doing so it considers how the different elements of various practices might be 're-crafted' (Spurling et al., 2013, p.9) to achieve disability equality and sustainability, highlighting potential pathways for synthesis.

This type of analysis also fits well with the approach to disability outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis. 'Breaking down' practices into their various elements using Shove and colleagues' (2012) analytic framework of materials, competences and meanings enables an exploration of social-relational aspects of disability, including material factors. The resulting analysis supports the argument that researchers engaged with sustainable practices both can and should take issues of disability equality into account. Ignoring or underemphasising these issues undermines their own chances of success. Although this may at face value seem simplistic, it seems clear from other evidence presented in this thesis that disability equality is being widely ignored in sustainability contexts. This analysis therefore rigorously and clearly sets out the various concerns that environmental researchers from any tradition need to take into account to fully include disability issues.

This chapter focuses on two examples of practices – recycling and travelling. These were chosen as key examples because they were the two topics most discussed by research participants. This indicates that they were potentially significant aspects of participants' understandings of sustainable lifestyles. Practically speaking, this means there is significant, detailed data to engage with for this analysis. As this research was not contingent on the use of a social

practice approach, data was generated by means of one interview encounter alone. This is not ordinarily the sole source of data for empirical social practice research, although interviewing does have a place in social practice research (Hitchings, 2012). Because of the nature of the discussions, however, many participants did go into detail about embodied routines and ways of doing. Alternatively, people who experience disability are more likely to be aware of their own embodiments because of the barriers encountered to everyday activities which non-disabled people might take for granted. Both examples are also situated in the local policy context. Recycling practices enable a detailed discussion of the potential disabling aspects of materials and competences, while travel practices demonstrate the relevance of different meanings and the impact of other practitioners on the outcome of particular practices.

7.1 Recycling

Recycling was the most commonly-cited example of a sustainable practice by participants in this research. Household recycling fits well within policy discourses of individual responsibility for sustainability (Horne et al., 2011). Its popularity may reflect the established nature of recycling as a focus of local governments since the 1980s (Chappells and Shove, 1999). There have been various innovations in recent years, such as widespread doorstep recycling for many everyday items being made available in different local authority areas. Chappells and Shove highlighted the diversity of these different local authority arrangements back in 1999; the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee recently recommended that a more standardised approach across local authorities would 'maximise recycling of a wide range of materials' (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, 2014, p.20). Currently many materials are not being recycled to their full potential because of issues caused by this lack of consistency, such as recycling advice on product labels being unable to account for the specificity of local schemes.

Household recycling is technically a bundle of practices. This is because of the slightly different, although overlapped, materials and competences involved in

recycling different types of materials. In Leeds, doorstep recycling is available for domestic households, with a monthly-collected green wheelie bin that takes mixed paper, plastic and metal recycling (Leeds City Council, 2013a). Only plastics of types 1, 2, and 4 are collected, however, and glass recycling is not available on the doorstep. Community glass recycling is widely located, however, for example in supermarket car parks. Garden waste is also collected fortnightly from the doorstep with a brown wheelie bin, and other waste in a weekly-collected black wheelie bin. These collection regimes were in place at the time of fieldwork; some changes have been rolled out in different areas since then. Two areas also have a food waste collection, leftover from a pilot scheme that was unsuccessful in a funding bid to roll it out across the city (Yorkshire Evening Post, 2012).

Individuals with proof of disability status can apply for assisted collections. This is either a 'wheel out', where full bins are moved by the collection workers but empty bins are wheeled back in by the resident, or a wheel out/wheel in, where bins are both removed and replaced by collection workers. Items for mixed recycling (such as tins and milk bottles) must be washed out before putting into the green bin. The council Integrated Waste Strategy aims to 'encourage maximum public participation' (Leeds City Council, 2005, p.4). It discusses the behavioural and cultural changes needed to increase individuals' habits around waste and recycling. Facilitating these changes includes: 'appropriate, convenient and accessible' (Leeds City Council, 2005, p.9) household waste collections; encouragement, for example incentivising the use of 'real' nappies over disposable to reduce waste to landfill; and enforcement. Enforcement – such as fines for persistent offenders (e.g. fly-tippers) – is used where other approaches fail. Enforcement cases are also publicised as deterrents to others.

There is an implied contract here. The council provide the bins themselves and a regular collection service; in return, householders sort their waste correctly and present it in a standardised way to facilitate collection. Either party varying from this 'contract' becomes a focus of public disapprobation. For example, if the council fail in their collection duties then letters may be written to local papers or councillors complained to. Alternatively, if a householder consistently leaves their bins on the highway, allows them to overflow or otherwise leaves

waste outside of the authorised receptacles (e.g. in a front garden), they may be given warnings and the threat of fines (Leeds City Council, 2005).

People living in apartment blocks have varying arrangements depending on the management of the block. One participant in this research, for example, described living in a privately-rented newly-built apartment block which had communal recycling facilities in the basement of the building, with chutes down to the bins from the floor above. Additionally, there are eight 'recycling sites' around the city which householders can visit to get rid of pre-sorted domestic waste or recycling, as well as other items such as small electricals, tetrapaks, textiles (Leeds City Council, 2013a). This analysis focuses primarily on the practice of doorstep recycling, although where relevant the experiences of those participants with different arrangements or using more communal facilities is also drawn upon.

The different types of recycling – for example plastic recycling – are examples of what are referred to as 'black box' practices (Shove et al., 2012). As described in Chapter Four, this refers to a practice made up of a number of constitutive practices, such as washing items and sorting and storing waste and recycling. As a whole however, recycling can still be considered broadly in terms of materials, competences and meanings. Materials include: the different wheelie bins (and other containers inside the house from which waste/recycling is transferred); the infrastructures of a kitchen; storage space for different types of waste; the collection service (i.e. bin lorries); and more broadly the waste sorting facilities where recyclable materials are transported.

There are various physical/mental/sensory 'competences' involved: washing; sorting (in particular with regard to distinguishing between recyclable and non-recyclable plastics); timing (in terms of putting correct bins out on appropriate days); and the physical task of wheeling bins in and out (for example up a drive or down a shared alley or side passage). Meanings are more difficult to discern (and may vary between different practitioners). For most participants in this research, however, one shared meaning of recycling was of 'doing one's bit' for the environment.

This is a description of recycling practice-as-entity – the assemblage of different elements. It is in considering practice-as-performance, however – how it is produced and reproduced by practitioners – that disabling aspects are more

clearly revealed as practitioners interact with the different elements of the practice. Therefore this analysis now considers participants' accounts of recycling and the issues encountered.

Many participants recycled at least some of their waste. Some were not sure what items could be recycled, with confusion around what materials went in which bins, particularly regarding which types of plastic could be recycled. Some participants reported 'overflowing' recycling bins because of the length of time between collections, indicating they were successfully able to recycle large amounts of their waste. Others participated in alternative practices such as reuse – for example of textiles, or home composting of food waste. One took her recyclable materials to communal recycling sites because she did not have a green bin at her property. Another, who was particularly conscientious around her waste practices, had in the past campaigned for extensions of the recycling facilities in Leeds. She described separating tea leaves – which could be composted – from their teabags – which did not tend to break down and so were sent (empty) to landfill. She also described intentionally including yoghurt pots in her recycling – an item currently not accepted by the council. This was a form of protest because she felt the council should be aware that they are possible to recycle. Yoghurt pots were another item that caused confusion; other participants described sending them to recycling without realising the council rules.

Participants who successfully recycled tended to be those with primarily non-mobility related impairments, or who lived with non-disabled family members or had access to PA support. For some, the issues described in the following section were at least currently circumvented, for others the problems encountered were actively preventing their ability to recycle. These are considered in terms of different elements of practice; in this case, materials and competences.

7.1.1 Materials

Wheelie bins – a key material element of recycling – represented a clear obstacle for some participants. The 'standard' wheelie bin – 107cm high, 240 litre capacity – is in itself at least partly constitutive of the competences required

to use it. It is designed for 'standard' use by an individual of a certain height, with a degree of physical strength. If the user cannot stand, the wheelie bin may become difficult to manoeuvre or need a different approach:

FG3 participant: Bins are hard to move, I think [...] I tried to tip one back to carry – to push it, and to push my wheelchair, and it's not easy at all

[...]

FG3 participant: I don't find that a problem [...] I go to the side of it, and at one end, on mine anyway, there's like a loop on end where you can put your finger in, you can lift it so far, and then just throw it in, or sometimes if I'm lucky, if bin men are there, they'll go 'oh hang on, leave it, we'll come and do it'.

As noted by this Focus Group extract and the description of the Leeds recycling infrastructure above, bin men are able to assist with wheeling out and/or wheeling back in. This is usually because assistance is requested via the council, although the extract above demonstrates that sometimes this can be arranged informally. Participants had mixed experiences with assisted collections, however. One participant had had a good service in her previous accommodation but it was inconsistent where she lived currently, while another described inadequate assistance:

...when I started with MS I couldn't carry my dustbin out, and then they brought the wheelie bin, and when I rang them up about it, they says 'well, what exactly is the problem' and I said 'well I've got MS, I can't do this, I can't do that', so she says 'oh right,' she says 'I'll put you down for a wheel in' so I thought well that's alright, sure enough, first week later, they came round, and they wheeled my bin out, emptied it, and just left it there! [...] you could have a wheel out, but you wouldn't get a wheel in. (Participant, FG2)

Relatedly, two interview participants did not feel able to ask for assisted collections because they lived with people who were not disabled. In one participant's case, however, she was the only one in the household who took responsibility for recycling. For another, the issue was that her husband often worked away in the week, meaning he was not always around on bin collection days:

You're supposed to be able to contact your council and they'll do this for you. I would fall between the cracks with this because my partner is not disabled, but he's not always here. (Participant 05)

These issues also highlight the disparity between considering the household as the 'carrier' of the recycling practice versus a particular individual in the household who might be the only one actually participating in the practice.

The wheelie bin, however, is only one element of recycling – as noted earlier, in Leeds, glass is not collected with doorstep recycling, meaning recycling practitioners have to transport it away from their homes to a communal local facility. Glass is heavy, which means in some cases relying on a car – which has implications for transport practices (discussed later) – or on assistance from others. Participant 19, who lived in a flat with a communal glass recycling facility, highlighted this: 'the only thing I had an issue with...was glass. You know, a few beer bottles, and they soon start to weigh quite a bit'. Also, the physical structure of glass recycling bins has built-in assumptions about the physicality of the user: 'you find when you go to the glass recycling the things are very high, and I would not be able to do that for myself' (Participant 09). Both of these participants relied on others – family or PAs – to assist with their recycling practice.

7.1.2 Competences

Putting recycling out represents the successful achievement of other activities such as sorting, identifying and (where necessary) washing recyclable materials. Again, there are various obstacles to these competences. Being able to reach the sink to wash up tins, for example, was not possible for one participant. He used a wheelchair but did not have an adapted kitchen: 'we don't wash tins out, you're supposed to wash tins out aren't you, I can't always get to the sink' (Participant 06). Sorting and identifying materials – which often have small print labels assuming a 'normal' reading ability – can be difficult for those with learning difficulties or visual impairments:

The information for recycling, like the dates of collection, bin collection, they all are small print and I cannot read small print [...] I don't know what you can and what you cannot recycle because of very small symbols on the things. (Participant 15)

This quote also highlights the need for the information provided by the council about recycling – which enables recycling practitioners to know what to put into their bin and when to wheel it out – to be provided in accessible formats.

This is another aspect of practice that can be enabled by the assistance of another non-disabled householder or PA.

Another issue is the competence of timing, which assumes an ability to reliably remember a once weekly – or once monthly – event, in order to make the recycling and waste available for collection. This can be difficult for people with fluctuating health, or who take medication which induces drowsiness or affects concentration, as described by Key Informant 01:

I think the thing with the recycling is that you always have to put it out late at night, by then I'm really tired, and probably had already taken my meds so I'm really groggy and can't remember which day of the week it is, and which week of the month it is and whether it's green bins or black bins and it just all gets too complicated.

This, and other issues described above such as sorting waste, being able to read relevant information and so on, were difficulties not only faced by disabled participants, as Participant 17 pointed out when talking about recycling and other people living on her street, in this extract:

...families where – either nobody speaks English, or people just don't care about recycling... sometimes a green bin just lives out on the pavement, and it's full of nappies [...] I think it's in lower income areas you get people who aren't interested, because the most important things in their life might be where to get their heroin from or whatever, and when people are living such chaotic lives... And if you're trying to fight for your kids because social services've threatened to take them, then you're not gonna care about recycling, you know there are many people in this area that live that kind of really desperate life, sort of on the edge of respectability... and a lot of people don't speak English, so you know even if the instructions are there even if they wanted to they don't understand em.... And speaking English is one thing, reading English is something else... it's a very multicultural road this... I think the government, they just always wanna put out something really easy, one thing covers all, and it just doesn't take the fact that people are individuals and everybody has different requirements, different capabilities, different needs, and different resources...

7.1.3 Infrastructures and interactions

Doorstep recycling is dependent on having access to this 'formal system of provision' (Horne et al., 2011, p.95). For one participant, living in student accommodation, no recycling facilities in terms of bins had been provided.

Another participant in this research was a resident in a care home which, being classed as a business for council tax purposes, did not qualify for the domestic doorstep recycling service. The home's managers declined to pay extra for recycling as well as business waste collection, and he had limited transport or access outside of the home, meaning in effect he was unable to successfully recycle:

It's more expensive to have separate collections for your recyclable or your organic materials, so [the care home] just don't bother! [...] nothing from any of the residents here or from the business side of the home gets recycled.

Current recycling practice in Leeds, in terms of practice-as-entity, contains numerous elements with disabling potentiality which are revealed as recycling is (un)successfully performed. Whether or not certain disabled people can successfully carry out recycling is dependent on the extent to which their embodiments match up to the assumed embodiments embedded in the various material aspects, and whether or not these take into account an embodiment that varies from a traditional 'able body'. If actual and assumed embodiments do not match up, successful practice is then contingent on workarounds, adaptations, and the assistance of family, PAs and/or council workers.

The recycling practices discussed above also have potential implications for other sustainable practices. Firstly, as described in Chapter Five, where wheelie bins are left out on pavements (instead of being wheeled back in after collection) they can cause significant obstructions to people using the pavement. This can cause difficulties for people with visual impairments or people using wheelchairs, for example. This impacts on the accessibility of their local environments. It is also a problem of households having to store two large wheelie bins. As some participants noted, some areas of Leeds have large numbers of back-to-back terraced houses with no space to store their bins. For some, a lack of storage space means going without a recycling bin.

Secondly, as noted earlier, glass recycling requires the use of a car if there is not a facility nearby or if the glass is too heavy to carry. This leads to increasing CO₂ emissions from private cars. It is difficult to measure the extent to which this is offset by the positive environmental impact of recycling the glass. Leeds City Council appears to rule out including glass in doorstep recycling in a post on its website:

Due to the costs associated with processing glass which is considered a problematic material when mixed with other dry recyclables. This mixing poses a risk of contamination of other recyclable materials by broken glass fragments. This is a big issue with paper, which is the most common material in our recycling bins, as quality is an important factor in achieving the best value for these recycled material. A separate collection for glass at the kerbside is also not possible as the value of glass collected would not cover the costs of the additional vehicles, containers and crews required for the service. (Leeds City Council, 2013b, no pagination)

Many other local authorities do manage to collect glass on the doorstep, however, including at least one neighbouring authority to Leeds. WRAP provide a 'Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities' (2008) in relation to glass recycling; Leeds appears to not follow any of the options it sets out (neither collecting at kerbside nor separating glass colours at the bottle banks) and therefore the appeal to quality seems lacking. Leeds has been substantially affected in recent years by cuts to local authority funding from central government (Gay, 2014), however, and so it seems unlikely that there would be further investment in this in the near future.

This analysis can also be used to demonstrate the multiple ways that recycling practices could be 're-crafted' for greater accessibility. Similarly, it highlights why just one alteration (e.g. assisted collections) may not be sufficient for ensuring accessibility. It reveals how a holistic approach would be needed to improve the accessibility of recycling as a performance by individuals. This might include: consideration of accessible kitchens; accessible and possibly tactile labelling and information; assisted collections; a reminder system or more flexible approach to collection; and information from the council in formats other than written.

For some disabled people, particular materials or competences may not be accessible for them personally. Therefore enrolling a PA or family member to perform the practice – delegating it in part or entirely – is another potential alternative. Schillmeier (2007) discusses an example of delegation in the case of a woman with a visual impairment boarding a bus, in an article examining the relation between practices and disability. This can be a 'risky business' – people may refuse (for example Participant 03 whose mother does not recycle, meaning he – living with her – is also not able to). Alternatively, it may mean

using up PA hours which limits the ability to participate in another activity: creating accessibility in one area at the expense of another.

While none of the options described will necessarily increase recycling rates, they create the minimum conditions to enable disabled people to participate. It is also interesting that a less direct intervention – such as an increase in the number of PA hours available or an accessible kitchen – could potentially impact the accessibility of sustainable practices. The accessibility of recycling, however, is also linked and may be interdependent with many other practices, such as employment (for example working hours) – as will be discussed further on.

7.2 Travel

Different types of travel – such as by bus, bike or car – are discrete practices. They are linked by a shared meaning and understanding of successful performance (reaching one's destination), however, and so can usefully be considered together. As noted in Chapter Five, a majority of interview participants in this research relied on private cars for much of their mobility outside the home. Private cars, and driving generally, are popular culprits for unsustainability. They are commonly referenced by environmental activists and organisations, particularly with regard to reducing CO₂ emissions. Emissions from private car use add up to over a quarter of all UK domestic emissions (Preston et al., 2013), so it is unsurprisingly a popular target for those wishing to transition to more sustainable practices. Driving is particularly embedded in UK society (Shove et al., 2012), however. Materially this relates to road infrastructures and town planning, and economically in terms of GDP growth from manufacture and consumption. Socially it relates to private cars being valued over other forms of transport and linked to social status (Gibson et al., 2013). Additionally, cycling has gradually shifted from an everyday activity towards a practice associated with masculinity and risk while driving has taken the opposite path (Shove et al., 2012).

Both nationally and locally, sustainable transport policy emphasises encouraging drivers to make different transport choices. There is a hierarchy from driving, at the bottom, to public transport, with cycling (and walking) at the top in terms of least emissions (as well as related benefits in terms of health and wellbeing). Leeds' Transport Plan (Leeds City Council, 2011) aims to incentivise the use of lower carbon forms of transport, for example giving discounts to public transport users. Additionally there are aims to expand the capacity of public transport and create more attractive, safer environments for pedestrians and cyclists.

The evolution of driving as a practice has been written about extensively (Shove et al., 2012 provide a detailed summary) and usually position driving as emerging from a risky pursuit engaged in by upper class males. For many disabled people, however, the history of driving as a practice emerged from an NHS rehabilitation scheme (Cyphus, 2012). The materials were different – a standardised three-wheel 'invalid carriage' rather than a four-wheel car which came in a range of makes and models – and the meanings (at least to those who provided the cars) were based around mobility aids (Ouch, 2013) rather than the meanings associated with other cars, such as leisure (Shove et al., 2012). The meanings to the drivers may have been more aligned in terms of mobility and convenience, however. Today, disabled people who receive Higher Rate mobility component under DLA (now being transferred to Enhanced Rate Mobility Component under PIP) are eligible to use this payment to lease a car from the Motability Scheme – and the scheme was used by at least nine participants in this research.

As noted above, common travel practices may be discrete practices such as driving, cycling, or taking public transport (or a combination of any of these). There are also elements that are shared across these different practices. For a person with a physical impairment, the material elements of any transport practice must include an accessible built environment infrastructure outside the home and on route to the destination or vehicle – for example dropped kerbs on pavements and step-free stations. Additionally materials include a vehicle that is accessible for their needs – for example able to accommodate a wheelchair or other mobility aid – and which provides adequate support for the body – for example for balance or stability. For a person with a sensory impairment or

learning difficulty, the various ‘competences’ around journey planning (such as interpreting timetables or maps, locating and identifying stops and destinations) are contingent on accessible information, for example clear audio and visual announcements on buses or trains. There are a number of different meanings that might be associated with transport practices: mobility or access; (in)convenience; and (un)sustainability.

7.2.1 Materials and competences

The majority of participants in this research faced difficulties using particular forms of transport, but the most often cited was bus travel. Some participants had previously used buses and since given up; a few still relied on buses despite the accessibility issues they faced. Leeds only has a limited local rail infrastructure and no light rail so, for the majority of residents, daily travel options are private cars, taxis, buses, cycling or walking.

Material infrastructure and vehicles themselves were a significant issue for many participants. Many improvements have been made to buses since the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) – now succeeded by the Equality Act (2010) – came into force, such as removing steps and central poles at the entrance to the bus, installing retractable ramps and low floor and ‘kneeling’ bus technologies. These alterations mean that people with a variety of mobility impairments can (at least in theory) now board buses. The accessible features of the bus, however, have to also work in conjunction with the infrastructure of the bus stop and built environment between the stop and people’s homes. This was a key issue for some participants: ‘it’s an end-to-end point of thing’ (Participant 19). Other participants described in detail specific issues such as a lack of seating at many stops and the distance to them:

It’s getting to the bus stop... I got a bus a few weeks ago with my friend [...] and she had to come to my house in her car, and drive us to the bus stop, and leave the car in the street by the bus stop because just getting to the bus stop’s too far for me to walk. (Participant 09)

Similarly, the material (accessible) elements of the bus are also contingent on other ‘practitioners’ of bus travel. Disabled people’s bus travel practice also interlocks with and is dependent upon the bus driver’s practice, for example stopping when the bell is rung, or mediating between disabled and non-disabled

passengers for the use of wheelchair spaces or priority seats. Relations with other bus users are particularly relevant for disabled passengers' successful bus travel. Shove and colleagues (2012) note that other people can be co-opted into a practice as co-performers. Sometimes performing a practice requires more than one practitioner; they use the example of a chauffeur historically involved in driving practices. For disabled people, if particular materials or competences are not accessible for them personally, then enrolling a PA or family member to perform the practice – delegating it in part or entirely – is another alternative (Schillmeier, 2007). In the case of participants in this research, non-disabled practitioners may need to be enrolled to 'create' access by removing themselves from wheelchair spaces or priority seats, or to assist a passenger with a visual impairment in identifying their stop. As described by various participants in this research, however, this 'enrolment' of driver or passengers can be frequently unsuccessful, with varying consequences:

Participant 16 – sometimes I'll get on the bus and I've got to get off and wait for the next one behind because somebody's on with a buggy, two young kids [...] the buggy's where the wheelchair would go, the children sit where the disabled would sit, and I can't get up the steps to get to the back, so I have to get off. Cos though the driver can say to the person... the driver's prerogative, if they feel they are able to say to the person 'can you fold the buggy down, somebody in a wheelchair wants to get on', they don't do anything for the children sat in the disabled area, it's just a case of 'well there's another bus behind me. Might be twenty minutes away, and you might have the same problem when that one comes in, but there is another bus behind me!' so

Researcher – does that happen to you regularly?

Participant 16 – quite regularly yeah, because by the time you've finished work and you get to the bus stop it's rush hour, everyone's trying to go – but it's not always children, sometimes it's just somebody who's... a seat on the bus and they've sat on it and they ain't moving for nobody!

...Often they don't know where it is you want to go to, or they're not sure, or they forget to tell you when they've got there, or when you do get there it's three stops down or two stops before where you asked for – and they don't tell you that when you get off... (Participant 20)

These examples highlight how other practitioners carrying out their own practices can impact on the outcomes of others' practices; non-disabled practitioners may carry their travel practices in more or less accessible ways. Hargreaves (2011) has also highlighted the importance of social interactions for

pro-environmental practices. This is in some ways an example of how different practices may 'shape each other' (Shove et al., 2012, pp.107-108) although Shove and colleagues are more focused on explicitly different practices rather than similar practices with different practitioners. The idea that 'individual practices 'make' the environments that others inhabit' (Shove et al., 2012, p.108), however, is relevant for the impact of other people's practices creating access – or removing it – for disabled people. These examples demonstrate that more attention needs to be given to the relevance of differences between practitioners as well as practices.

Returning to difficulties participants faced, crowding was another issue for some. Although this again involves other bus users, it is less to do with interactions with other bus users than with the service planning by bus operators. This presented problems for those with visible and invisible physical impairments, and also impacted on participants with mental health conditions:

Particularly when I was using public transport a lot, I'd often get off buses mid journey because I was so stressed by the environment of the inside of the bus with lots of people and lots of noise and crowding and not being able to get a seat and all that kind of stuff. (Participant 17)

Additionally, using buses could be complicated – in terms of journey planning – and for participants with learning difficulties this posed a significant barrier: 'if I went on the bus I would end up in America or somewhere like that' (Participant 03).

Participant 18 gave an extended account of her travel practices which demonstrates how different issues interact to mean that the only travel practice she can successfully perform is driving. The extract below (contracted for length and broken up by researcher comments) neatly demonstrates a number of the materials and infrastructures, as well as competences, which are inaccessible to her. They also highlight interlocking practices (such as her employment) which limit her options apart from driving and, relatedly, the impacts of other practitioners:

...I have a car, because I can't manage the buses, firstly due to the accessibility of the buses [...] I used to use buses, I used to get on, say 'can you please wait til I'm sat down, I'll be getting off at X stop' – sometimes they'd wait til you were near a seat, but not sat down, then when it come to getting off, I would ring the bell.... But if you don't get up, they will go sailing past that stop.

This illustrates her precarious relationship with the materials of bus use – the accessibility of the bus is context-specific and contingent on the drivers' practices also.

So I've now having to use a car... I work part time, so I could give people a lift into work, but then they'd have to find another way home ... if I was in somebody else's car, and needed to go home – sometimes I have needed to go home before my finishing day, then the difficulty is that effectively you know they would have to come out of their work, drive me home, and then come back into work. And parking spaces are very difficult where I work, so effectively they might lose a space [...] I actually have an allocated disabled space.

Here she describes how her own employment practices (which are accessible to her, being part time and flexible around her health fluctuations) impact on car-sharing practices. Key competences of successful car-sharing are reliability and flexibility in terms of fitting in with other 'car-sharers'. It also demonstrates that for her (as opposed to non-disabled co-workers) the parking infrastructures are more accessible.

One of the schemes that we have at work is about getting bikes – but... I can't ride a two wheel bike, I believe I'd be able to ride a trike [...] but there isn't even an opportunity to be on this bike scheme for the simple reason – trikes aren't included. Even though the price of a trike is on average the same... of a pretty good bike that they're selling on these schemes.

In this extract we see that the materials of cycling – in this case a trike and/or financial resources – are not available, ruling this out immediately.

For example an electric car [...] but I get my car via the charity Motability [...] but it's one of the things that isn't on offer on the scheme yet for the electric cars. And even if it was... because I live in a ground floor flat, I have quite a long disabled walkway to the road – I wouldn't have a way of charging it up even if I had an electric car.

This final quote highlights the lack of infrastructure currently in place for electrified driving. It also shows an intersection with accessibility issues – in terms of disabled people who get their vehicles from the Motability scheme. Motability do now offer electric vehicles, but only with an advance payment approximately ten times the cost of the cheapest advance payment on a non-electric car, which effectively prices out those on lower incomes.

7.2.2 Meanings

The meanings of different transport practices were diverse. For the few participants who walked, meanings of health, wellbeing, and exercise were mentioned, as well as being carbon neutral, having a connection to the environment and cost-saving. No participants mentioned cycling in terms of a practice they performed (although one talked about cycling before she acquired her impairment and another thought that it might be a possibility for her if she could afford a tricycle). Cycling was variously associated with pain, difficulty, fear and opposition in terms of disabled people's walking practices. A particular example was bikes approaching silently and therefore causing danger to pedestrians with visual impairments, for example at bus stops. This was highlighted by Participant 07 and also noted in other research (Mathers, 2008; Natural England, 2008). A few participants were regular bus users, but buses were cited as problematic in some way by the majority of participants, with meanings such as unreliability, expense, impracticality, stress, risk but also environmental virtue (in relation to taxi use). Meanings identified around car use were expense, environmental 'bad', necessity, accessibility, mobility, utility, reliability, convenience, spontaneity, wellbeing and freedom.

It is striking how many positive meanings came out of the research in terms of driving, given its status as an environmental 'bad'. Horton (2003), for example, found that the car was a key symbol of 'ungreen' practice for people concerned about environmental issues. The positive meanings found in this research are also different to those of nondisabled car users – such as comfort, cultural capital, and time-efficiency – in another piece of research around sustainability and transport practices, although in an Australian context (Gibson et al., 2013). This is perhaps because of the way that driving for disabled people in the UK has been historically positioned by governments as a legitimate access need in terms of a mobility aid. Motability has provided the material elements in terms of adapted vehicles, and blue or orange badge schemes have contributed to accessible infrastructures since the 1970s.

Understandings of disability have also interacted with the evolution of driving practices. Treating disability as an individual 'problem' with an individualised solution (i.e. a private car) fitted in with the promotion of the private car over investment in social infrastructure. For example, focusing on accessible public

transport would have been a more social response to disability. This has led to a situation where car use is significantly more accessible – or at least it was described as such by a majority of participants with mobility impairments in this research. This is despite more recent attempts to create accessible public transport, in a somewhat similar way that attempts to revive cycling as an everyday practice have so far been unsuccessful due to the embeddedness of driving practices in the wider population (as described by Shove et al., 2012).

Returning to the current project however, car use was essential for successfully performing other everyday practices such as getting to work or attending doctor's appointments, or for unplanned trips (because of the necessity of booking assistance in advance for rail travel). Two participants also talked about how their car use also interlocked with other practices such as caring for an older relative or giving lifts to friends. Perhaps more fundamentally though, driving provides essential mobility outside the home, despite an awareness that this contradicts environmental concerns:

Having a car is a big thing, you know in terms of carbon footprints and all that, but I couldn't live my life without it, you know, I'd be housebound... I mean that is no life. So yeah, the car gives me a quality of life that I wouldn't have – that I didn't have before I got it. And it would only have got worse over the years without the car [...] it's been life-changing, you know, and it's meant that I can get to really normal stuff like doctor's appointments [...] I've always said about the car... it's given me wings [...] so it's a concession I make, cos I couldn't have any quality of life without it. I know that environmentally it goes against the grain, but there isn't another option for me. (Participant 17)

Participant 17's description of her car as life-changing – a recurrent theme in her interview – powerfully demonstrates the way the accessibility afforded by her car is significantly implicated in her quality of life (she also described elsewhere how public transport is no longer accessible to her due to worsening impairment). It is also interesting how wellbeing (implied in this account but also specifically described by other participants) was associated with car use, while negative associations were made elsewhere with cycling e.g. pain and difficulty. Driving is usually (in other environmental research and mainstream discourse) positioned as opposed to practices associated with wellbeing such as walking and cycling. Although walking was also associated with wellbeing in this research (by those participants who were able to get around on foot), this finding is potentially significant for indicating why disabled people's perspectives

are so important to include. Similarly it highlights that some suggestions for reducing car use are unlikely to be fully successful, for example removing driving infrastructures (i.e. parking spaces) from new homes and ‘cultural interventions’ associating driving with negative health consequences (Spurling et al., 2013, p.29). These suggestions are currently being put forward by practice theorists in terms of shifting practices away from car use, however.

7.3 Disability equality and sustainability

Both recycling and travelling have different implications for disability equality and sustainability. Recycling is not (yet) a necessary part of inclusion in society – although it may be moving in this direction given its meaning for most participants as ‘doing one’s bit’ for the environment. Therefore, while accessibility is important, ‘failure’ to successfully perform recycling potentially has more implications for environmental sustainability than for disability equality. In the case of travelling, getting out of the house is in the majority of cases vital for inclusion. Therefore ‘failure’ in this case has more implications for disability equality than for environmental sustainability. Conversely, successfully travelling – which for most of the participants involved in this research meant driving or being driven – has fairly significant implications for environmental sustainability.

Larger research evidence, however, indicates that this piece of research may have had a high number of car users compared to the larger disabled population. Almost half of disabled people in the UK solely rely on public transport (Jolly et al., 2006) compared to only three interview participants out of twenty in this research. This evidence – as well as the disabling elements of bus travel identified in this research – points to a need for significant improvement in public transport. For those who currently rely on cars, the widespread electrification of driving (and installing the related infrastructure) as well as subsidising electric cars through Motability might be at least an interim step. This could enable these disabled people to reduce travel-related emissions without compromising accessibility. Electric cars were only dismissed by participants in terms of cost and current lack of charging infrastructure, so this

might be well-received, although further research would be needed. In terms of issues less integral to disability equality, such as recycling, increasing the availability and amount of PA support for individuals might help to promote maximum participation. This and accessible, locally relevant information could contribute toward equality, if providing accessible materials and infrastructures more widely is not feasible.

7.4 Discussion

Both examples – of recycling and travelling practices – have illustrated a number of ways in which a social practice approach can illuminate the various disabling elements of different practices. The detailed discussion of recycling demonstrated how improving the accessibility of one element may not make a significant change to the accessibility of the overall practice. Additionally, the identification of other practitioners' practices as a factor in enabling or disabling the use public transport is also relevant when considering how to improve accessibility. Both examples reveal the need for a holistic approach to accessibility and demonstrate that access should not be a problem delegated to disability groups to solve.

The examples have also highlighted areas currently missed by practice theorists. The issue of meanings – and the implied meanings embedded in attempts to alter practices – has particular implications. Perhaps because of the attempt to not focus on the individual, the impact on the individual is also forgotten. As Sayer points out, however, individuals' understandings 'are partly constitutive of behaviours and practices, researchers and policy makers will misunderstand them if they ignore them, and thus their policies will be either ineffectual or insensitive or both' (Sayer, 2013, p.172). This can be seen in a report by the Sustainable Practices Research Group, who were funded by DEFRA. Spurling and colleagues (2013) demonstrate examples of how it might be possible to move towards more sustainable practices through policy. Among these, they note that the Code for Sustainable Homes (DCLG, 2010) takes various practices for granted and make suggestions for improvements. One of

these, after discussing how to improve facilities for cyclists, is to 'encourage defection from driving, for example by restricting parking space, or specifying that this should be as far away from the home as possible.' (Spurling et al., 2013, p.44).

Although they note that their examples should not be taken as recommendations because their impact on sustainability would need further empirical research, it is not difficult to see the ableist implications of these suggestions. They also conflict with another housing sustainability measure – the Lifetime Homes Standards – which is actually drawn on within the Code for Sustainable Homes but not addressed by the authors of this report. Contained in this set of standards is the specification to ensure parking spaces are as *close* to dwelling entrances as possible, anticipating the needs of older and disabled people (Lifetime Homes, 2010). The difference is that the former suggestion prioritises environmental sustainability, while the latter is more focused on social sustainability. As discussed in Chapter One, sustainability requires both of these factors to be taken into account. Either, alone, is therefore problematic either for disability equality or for future environmental sustainability. They are not necessarily irreconcilable, however, as the Code for Sustainable Homes demonstrates.

Another idea in Spurling and colleagues' report discussed changing practices around cycling and 'cultural interventions that associate driving with congestion and ill-health and cycling with speed and healthy living' (Spurling et al., 2013, p.29). The report references a social marketing campaign (Manchester Friends of the Earth, 2006) which contrasted 'fat lane' driving with 'fast lane' cycling. This kind of message stigmatises both overweight and driving while promoting a particular embodiment that is not necessarily attainable. For example, one needs to be relatively fit and confident to cycle 'fast'. This neatly exemplifies both the insensitivity and ineffectuality warned of by Sayer (2013). Spurling and colleagues directly reference the concept of normalcy in their arguments about the potential for a social practice approach to facilitate social change:

Identifying problem framings and the underpinning assumptions of intervention reveals how policy reinforces what is 'normal' in everyday life... Social change is about the *new* becoming *normal*... A practice perspective encourages us to imagine what the 'new normal' of everyday sustainability might look like—and suggests possible trajectories towards it. (Spurling et al., 2013, p.14)

Although practice theorists such as these may talk about transitioning practices to a 'new normal', the analysis presented in this chapter (and elsewhere in this thesis) implies that 'normal' is not a useful concept when considering disability. As discussed in Chapter One, the concept of 'normal' has been implicated in the construction of ableism (Campbell, 2008a; Davis, 1997). In the case of practice transitions, the 'new normal' perhaps needs to be *no* normal – an appreciation of diversity. Different embodiments and experiences should be thoroughly integrated rather than being an afterthought.

Defection from practices – that is, a practice no longer being performed – also bears consideration (Walker, 2013; Shove et al., 2012). Horton's (2006a) account of research with environmental citizens notes that their citizenship was a 'timed' phenomenon. Certain times and events were constitutive of their 'green' lifestyles. Those who perform environmental citizenship tend to be those with the most 'spare' time available, for example not working fulltime or parenting young children. Those without these responsibilities can sustain their environmental citizenship more easily than those for whom these responsibilities change: 'for many people full-time work and the onset of active parenthood impinge on their ability to sustain levels of participation' (Horton, 2006a, p.142). If participation cannot be sustained, individuals 'defect' from these practices. This fits well with the idea that certain practices are time-bound, as described by Shove and colleagues (2012, p.128):

In theory, everyone has access to the same number of hours in a day, but for some people their time is simply not their own. In the language of practice, for one reason or another they are bound to carry specific practices, the enactment of which limits their scope to do very much else.

This points to a need to consider the timings of practices alongside other elements. Considering timings of activities extends to issues of disability, and also ties in with the concept of 'crip time'. Kafer (2013) notes that impairment is a temporal phenomenon; almost everyone experiences disability at some point in their lives. 'Crip time' is a concept created from within disability culture and relates to various shared experiences such as 'the disability-related events that always seem to start late or to the disabled people who never seem to arrive anywhere on time' (Kafer, 2013, p.26). This may be because certain activities take extra time, or due to inflexibility of punctuality as defined by non-disabled people. A basic example might be distance, when something is described as 'x

minutes away' – but 'x' will be different depending on who is making the trip. This is not just due to impairment effects but may also relate to any one aspect of the infrastructure needed for accessibility (PAs, equipment etc.) or encounters with disabling barriers creating a delay (Kafer, 2013). Price (2009) notes that flexibility is just as important as extra time in terms of defining 'crip time'. It is therefore about creating a different approach to time rather than expecting disabled people to fit into non-disabled timings.

This is relevant particularly when it comes to fitting in 'extra' time for pro-environmental practices. This might be the time it takes to wash up and recycle a tin versus just putting it in the waste bin, or flexibility, such as regarding the timed nature of ensuring wheelie bins are made available for waste collections. Participants in this research also described how certain practices such as showering might take them longer than others – which then impacts on water use. More generally, time available could limit (or enable) particular practices, (discussed further in Chapter Eight). The amount of PA time a person has access to is also relevant here, as noted earlier with regard to using PA hours to assist with recycling. Time is therefore another aspect to take account of when considering how accessible a particular practice might be. Extra time needed for particular practices may cause 'defection' – and relatedly defection may occur with the onset or worsening of impairment – particularly where a practice is not fully accessible. This may also constitute an issue of justice in term of unequal access (Walker, 2013). There is also a risk that defection will lead to experiences of judgemental environmentalism (discussed in Chapter Six section 6.2.2) – and possibly perceptions of 'defective' or failed environmental citizenship.

Finally, Walker critiques much of the social practice discourse to date for its concern with:

the 'successful' and 'skilled' performance of practice, neglecting the consequences of the 'doings' that are described, and overlooking issues of access and inclusion/exclusion' (Walker, 2013, p.181)

This suggests that the performance of a practice and its outcomes are not necessarily aligned. It is also possible to apply this critique to demonstrate the potential for a social practice approach to explain a critique of environmental citizenship theory. The concepts of practice-as-entity and practice-as-

performance can be used to explore how environmental citizens such as those in Wolf and colleagues' (2009) study (described in Chapter Three section 3.2.3) can be identified as such but still have high environmental impacts. Their successful performance does not necessarily translate into positive impact. This requires a consideration of environmental citizenship as a set of related practices – a lifestyle (Shove et al., 2012). As noted in Chapter Three, Dobson also makes this argument by suggesting that environmental citizenship can be conceptualised as 'a set of substantive practices' (Dobson, 2010, p.7).

Considering the concept of practice-as-entity – a practice describable with reference to its constitutive elements – it is possible to describe environmental citizenship in this way. At least as far as the mainstream theoretical description suggests, it is a conjunction of particular understandings – a set of values (including concern for future generations) and particular aims (such as attempting to reduce one's ecological footprint) – and competences and materials (which alter depending on the specific environmental practice concerned). As performed, this environmental citizenship reproduces status for those who can engage with it. As highlighted in Chapter Three, there is status to be gained in the performance of environmental duties (MacGregor, 2006). As a 'valued practice' – one that denotes status – Shove and colleagues (2012) describe how practitioners who are able to perform it can also influence its direction of development. There is an issue, however, if this environmental citizenship status is being gained and guided by those whose practices still have significant negative environmental impact.

This argument has similarities to the critique of environmental citizenship in Chapter Three (section 3.2.4) which points out that it is possible for an individual to 'look like' an environmental citizen and gain recognition from that by displaying the right values – even if their actions do not line up. Conversely, those whose practices actually have a lower environmental impact – but do not qualify for the status of environmental citizen because their performance is different – may have their contribution overlooked. So for example, some disabled people's practices may not be recognised as pro-environmental – such as some of those described in Chapter Five like keeping warm with extra blankets or going to bed. Therefore they are less likely to be identified as environmental citizens than a person with a higher income who has installed

solar panels on his or her roof – even if the latter person's lifestyle has an overall higher environmental impact. This discussion begins to show how a practice approach also has the potential to provide a critique of environmental citizenship. The consequences of this will be explored further in Chapter Nine.

7.5 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the usefulness of a social practice approach for examining interactions between accessibility and sustainable practices. It has also highlighted, however, that currently practice approaches are not taking disability equality into account. This is something that needs to change. Shove and colleagues do argue for 'sweeping, systemic reviews of how different areas of public policy... inadvertently but effectively reproduce unsustainable ways of life' (Shove et al., 2012, p.158). It seems clear from this chapter that policy areas affecting disabled people are prime candidates for this kind of review. If – as seems to be the case in the wider literature – this kind of practice approach is gaining momentum, it needs to be conducted with consideration of different embodiments in mind. Even though the focus is not on the individual in a social practice approach, ignoring (or making implicit assumptions about) the carrier of the practice may lead to ableist suggestions for policy and strategy. Similarly, a focus on the practice that overlooks its outcomes may lead to unintended consequences. A social practice approach, however, has potential to critique more individualistic approaches such as environmental citizenship also. The next chapter investigates further issues relating to environmental citizenship arising from this research.

8 Rights and Responsibilities

This chapter considers broad issues in terms of citizenship, rights and responsibilities that participants discussed in interviews and focus groups. Themes arising are compared with how individuals are situated, and these issues framed, in policy and theoretical literatures. To briefly recap, environmental citizenship theories were highlighted as potentially significant in the pilot study findings. In Chapter Three, mainstream theories and key critiques, including the beginning of a disability studies perspective, were outlined. Mainstream environmental citizenship theories are grounded in values, for example a concept of the common good. While different theories emphasise rights or responsibilities, implications of different embodiments are often ignored. Another significant issue is that in the current context, status is gained through enacting citizen obligations. Disabled people are often not considered full citizens bearing these obligations, however, or may face barriers to performing them. Both these issues may lead to situations where representations of environmental citizenship are exclusive of disabled people. This was also exemplified in the 'environmental' citizen of policy, and in Chapter Six with some of the ableist discourses identified in the environmental movement. This chapter explores how participants understood and interacted with citizenship ideas in this context.

Interview questions were designed to talk about aspects of citizenship rather than the concept itself. As Luque (2005) points out, 'citizenship' is not a term people often use in lay contexts. Therefore it seemed more appropriate to talk about everyday but directly relevant concepts such as choice, rights and responsibilities, and contribution and work, and within these conversations look for 'faint traces of environmental citizenship as they emerge in ordinary, unremarkable situations' (Luque, 2005, p.212). These concepts are all relevant for this research, particularly in the light of literature which suggests that disabled people may not be afforded responsibility by non-disabled others. Fulfilling obligations also plays a significant role in attaining status in current society. The previous chapters have explored citizenship as practiced; this

chapter will focus on how participants expressed their understandings around citizenship more directly. A few participants (discussed further on) chose to talk about citizenship itself or were asked about it explicitly because it seemed appropriate in the context of their interviews. Generally, however, 'lay' terms worked well in prompting participants to talk about their own relationship to environmental concerns, as will be demonstrated in the following sections.

8.1 Responsibility

Responsibilities and rights were touched on, if not discussed in-depth, in most of the individual interviews. Almost every participant talked about the idea of responsibility regarding the environment. The first response to the question 'whose job/whose responsibility is it to look after the environment' was usually 'everybody's'. Most participants then went on to give a more nuanced answer. Additionally, issues of responsibility and capacity arose in different ways in other areas of the interviews.

A few participants expressed a strong view that responsibility belonged to the individual. Participant 10 raised the idea of individuals attempting to avoid responsibility. He suggested that government 'nudges' were not always effective, and that much responsibility therefore lay with individuals:

I think a lot of people will just say 'oh government should do x y and z' but I think that's only cos they wanna absolve themselves of responsibility because actually government doesn't do anything apart from provide mechanisms to persuade individuals to make certain choices. So at the end of the day a lot of it comes down to individuals And just the fact that something's taxed very highly or heavily regulated or something doesn't mean that it's gonna stop people doing it.

Although this particular perspective was unique to Participant 10, the perception of government failure more generally was present in other participants' accounts, as discussed later in this chapter. A majority of participants, however, suggested that individuals and government – or other organisations/institutions – share responsibility: 'it is up to the individual, each individual is responsible, but we have to rely on institutions to guide us' (Participant 05). This kind of framing echoes Middlemiss's (2010) suggestion from theory that responsibility

can be understood as that of society to facilitate pro-environmental lifestyles – what she terms ‘situated responsibility’.

Again, however, there were nuances between different accounts. For some this was a normative expectation that governments needed to provide the infrastructure or support, but then it was the duty of individuals to make use of this. Others pointed out that while they thought this *should* be the case, in reality governments have not been playing their role so individuals have to step up. Conversely, a few participants seemed to feel that government dominates in terms of power and influence – whether for good or bad – and so individual action makes little difference: ‘it’s our responsibility but it’s the government, cos it’s the government that tells us what we can and we can’t do isn’t it, at the end of the day, we haven’t got a choice really’ (Participant 03).

Even participants who expressed a social understanding of disability (either implicitly or explicitly) still tended to subscribe to an individualized perspective on environmental responsibility, even if they were pessimistic about the outcome. For example, in Chapter Six Participant 18 described how the difficulties faced by disabled people needed to be more widely recognised. This was not, however, implying a distancing from responsibility, as she pointed out elsewhere in her interview: ‘trust me if any people can use something, and be green, we want to be... we’re just as aware as anybody else’. Nevertheless there were a few exceptions to this, such as in the following account which explicitly discusses the implications of accessibility on responsibility:

... if we had the same access to environmental projects we’d have to have the same rights and responsibilities, but I’m not sure I have the same rights of access... therefore you can’t have the same responsibility. But it should be equal – equal access, equal responsibility, you know, there shouldn’t be any difference... we should not have less responsibilities because we’re disabled ... that needs to be addressed... for us to have the same access and the same responsibility. (Participant 15)

Many participants seemed to be implying a facilitative, contractual relationship between individuals and the state. This contrasts with Dobson’s (2003, 2010) theory about ecological and environmental citizenship, however. He suggests that obligations are explicitly non-contractual and due to ‘strangers’ based on relative environmental impact. Contract approaches imply self-interest and risk failure where the other party is not trusted to fulfil their side of the bargain. The

focus of the participants in this research on the relative responsibilities of individuals and government, however, implies that their conception of the issue may be more like an extension of social citizenship and Marshall's ideas of rights and obligations (Newby, 1996). This conception also fits better with Middlemiss' (2010) concept of situated responsibility. As noted in Chapter Three, however, this also reflects Dobson's more recent work discussing the need for government-led intervention that is facilitative of environmental citizenship.

8.1.1 Efficacy

The concept of efficacy is also relevant to responsibility; participants held different levels of optimism in this regard. Ideas about environmental responsibility are constituted by the contexts and structures individuals act within (Skill, 2012). Participants who professed most belief in the efficacy of individual action were all students in postgraduate education and may therefore have experienced more opportunities relative to other participants. In previous research, the perceived efficacy of individual impact was found to be significant in terms of perceptions of individual responsibility, i.e. those that believed their actions were significant described feeling the most personal responsibility (Eden, 1993). On the other hand, those who did not feel their actions had influence tended to ascribe responsibility elsewhere. Similarities with these findings can be seen in the present research. The following two extracts demonstrate the contrast between participants with different approaches to efficacy and responsibility:

It is the responsibility of individuals, but we need to be supported in that by government. I think one of the biggest influences in everybody's lives are corporations, and the lack of regulation impacts a lot I think, so everything comes down to profit... and government is more influenced by that than about actually making the world a decent place to live, but then I think that isn't gonna change on its own and it might not be the responsibility of individuals to change that but there isn't any other way it's gonna happen. (Participant 11)

Well it should be all our responsibilities shouldn't it? But, at the end of the day, as an individual, you've only got a small amount of influence, haven't you. It's only within organisations or bigger organisations that've got a bigger influence, ultimately it's gotta come down to governments. (Participant 19)

Participant 11 suggests that if government cannot act, even if it *should not* be an individual's responsibility, they can still make an impact. Participant 19, however, suggests that because individuals can only ever have a small influence, responsibility has to rest with government. This reflects Eden's findings, and those from more recent research around ecological citizenship. Wolf and colleagues (2009) explored ecological citizenship values and practices with participants in a Canadian context. Their participants expressed viewpoints similar to Participant 11's perspective above: 'while part of the responsibility is held by government, participants express specifically that should the government not recognise or honour its responsibility individuals are still obliged to their own responsibility, and vice versa' (Wolf et al., 2009, p.515). The implied distancing from responsibility in accounts like that of Participant 19, however, are similar to Bickerstaff and Walker's (2002) findings in terms of transferring responsibility to other actors. These findings also echo those of Clarke and Agyeman (2011). Researching within the British BME community, they found that where individuals felt powerless to act they resisted discourses of personal responsibility by shifting it to others: in Participant 19's case, the government.

8.1.2 Mental health interactions

A specific issue around responsibility arose with two participants whose impairments were mental health-related. These participants, who expressed high levels of concern for environmental issues, appeared to feel a deep personal responsibility for the environment. Key Informant 01 described this experience in some detail:

Basically one of the things about my wonky brain is that I end up thinking that things are my responsibility when they're not, stuff like earthquakes and the big storm in the Philippines at the moment [...] my brain will think it's all my fault for being evil and that I caused that.

Specific interactions of mental health and environmental issues are complex, but this kind of over-identifying with responsibility for environmental issues is a possible indication of the negative effects of individualised environmental rhetoric to which we are all exposed. Similarly to the example at the end of Chapter Six, this could be an instance of disabled people experiencing

increased effects regarding an environment-related issue and again may therefore be an issue of justice.

8.2 Rights

In contrast to Clarke and Agyeman's (2011) findings, mentioned above, participants in this research were much less likely to invoke rights. This included those who resisted or shifted responsibility. Clarke and Agyeman suggest that 'disempowered groups... may be more likely to respond to environmental problems in terms of their "rights" to a better quality living environment... rather than identifying that everyone is in "the same boat"...' (Clarke and Agyeman, 2011, p.1778). In this thesis, it is not possible to fully compare the differences between their findings and those of this research, but this is a possible avenue for future work.

In this research, most participants who discussed rights expressed the view that rights to a good environment were contingent on responsibilities. Explicitly asked for their thoughts about a right to a good environment, many answered spontaneously in terms of responsibilities:

My value is strongly yes – everyone should have access to nature, but there comes with that the responsibilities then... so everyone likes the rights bit, [...] but then they don't like the responsibilities.
(Participant 08)

This kind of response invokes Giddens' classic description of New Labour rhetoric: 'no rights without responsibilities' (Giddens, 1998, p.65). It links into communitarian ideas of recognising obligation to a particular community (Dwyer, 2000), although in participants' accounts the obligation *to* was not always specified. Again, however, within these responses there were different nuances. For some, the emphasis was on having a right, but in a more collective sense that one person's right depended on everyone else respecting it – a kind of reciprocal relationship. For others, any right was contingent on responsibility:

I think we have rights, just as we have responsibilities to consider the impacts that we have on other people, we also have the right to

expect other people to behave in a similar way in consideration of the environment in which we live. (Participant 13)

I think we've got to make its own right though as well – we do have a right to [a good environment], we've gotta make sure we look after it surely. Nobody's actually got a right to an environment, if you abuse it then you have no right to it, do you? (Participant 06)

Participant 13 suggests a collective right, while Participant 06 describes a more contingent approach. Participant 13's approach here is interesting because in some ways it echoes the debate in environmental citizenship theory over the relationship between rights and obligations. Dobson (2010) suggests that rights and duties are less between citizens and government than between citizens themselves. Participant 13's emphasis on both rights *and* obligations may also be an acknowledgement of the multiply situated position of British disabled people as both potential environmental 'victims' and disproportionate emitters. This has resonance with the post-structuralist critique of citizenship because of multiple aspects of identity, discussed in Chapter Three.

The lack of emphasis on rights by these participants implies that their experiences cannot – from their own perspectives – be situated in terms of classical environmental justice framings, unlike the participants in Clarke and Agyeman's (2011) research. Given the critique of environmental justice in Chapter Three – that it carries implications of victimhood and a lack of agency – it is interesting that participants in this research reject this framing in favour of a much more responsibility- and individual agency-oriented, environmental citizenship-style perspective. This topic will be returned to in the following chapter.

8.2.1 Capacity

A final issue related to rights and responsibilities was capacity. This was discussed by a number of participants, including those who linked rights and responsibilities. Participant 02's account provides a good example of the issues raised. She used the example of another disabled person to illustrate her approach to the question about responsibility, as shown in this extract:

Researcher – so maybe a slightly trickier question – whose responsibility is it to look after the environment

Participant 02 – well I'd say everybody's. Well no I'll rephrase that – everybody who's capable to look after it, because obviously some people won't be able to

Researcher – and would you class yourself in that ... or

Participant 02 – no I'm talking about people who are paralysed, you know totally paralysed so they can't actually obviously move their body or – I had a friend who was mentally and physically handicapped and she couldn't even speak, [...] I mean she, well she died when she were 18 and she were in nappies til then so it's literally could not do any anything for herself, so it'd only be in like severe cases like that I think

[...]

Researcher – should we have rights to a good environment? [...]

I'm thinking about people who are more severely disabled, but you know if they aren't able to be more environmentally friendly, then do they have a right that we need to make the planet better for people who can't do it themselves

Participant 02 – I mean yes I would say that fair enough if they can and then possibly if we could incorporate the amount of people who are able to do that extra bit maybe, possibly [...] but I think even most disabled people would be able to do if not a lot, a little bit to help the environment.

Participant 02 seems to be saying that most disabled people have something to contribute in terms of environmental impact, but also recognising that for those most severely disabled this may not be a possibility. She seemed unconvinced by the idea suggested by the researcher that, in these cases, other people might take up the extra work on their behalf. For Participant 05, by contrast, this seemed to be a strongly held view:

We have right to a good environment, and we have a responsibility to maintain... that right environment. So if person A is less able to contribute to said environment, then person B C D E F and G should be helping take up the slack.

Later on, however, this conversation revealed that though she believed this in principle, she did not see it working in practice. She described how things had changed since she acquired her impairment: 'Maybe I always thought I was taking up the slack and maybe I think now I'm not taking up slack nobody else'd – I feel that other people aren't' (Participant 05). Participant 13 also discussed the position of severely disabled people, in the context of his experiences of living in residential care:

There are some people – with the best will in the world, whose impairment is so severe that they would not be able to exercise a choice that would mean taking on that responsibility, but then

there's also a lot of people who have experienced a lot of barriers which means that they now can't, or who continue to experience barriers that means that they now can't, you know, so ... society *does* disable people from having responsibility for their impact on the environment, and disabled people particularly so.

Participant 13 makes a distinction here between those most severely impaired and those who are significantly disabled but might be able to take on some responsibilities if properly facilitated. These kinds of discussions raise complex questions about the position of people with severe impairments. This is relevant with regard to the discussion in Chapters Three and Six around how disabled people are currently portrayed as 'resource sinks'. The link between contribution and status is also significant (given that an active contributory role seems impossible in these circumstances).

This thesis has so far highlighted that society values those who contribute, but has mostly considered the barriers that many disabled people face to this contribution and how it might be facilitated. This kind of approach may be inherently limited, however, because it assumes integration into current society. This misses 'deeply and subliminally embedded' (Campbell, 2008b, p.153) ableism in existing societal arrangements. A transformative and truly liberatory approach would instead look at how to transform society to begin at inclusion (and thus multidimensional disability equality). Relatedly, the limitations of current policy approaches to disability equality that have been highlighted by Abberley (2002) are also relevant here. By increasing inclusion for those disabled people who can work (with adaptations), those who cannot work at all risk becoming further excluded. Similarly, if individualised environmentalism and environmental action as status are only made as accessible as possible, not challenged for their fundamental assumptions of contribution, then those who are severely impaired may risk further exclusion. The implications of these ideas will be returned to in the next chapter. This chapter will now examine findings regarding how participants saw their own ability to contribute.

8.3 Time, work and contribution

As described in Chapter Four, the majority of participants in this research were not in paid employment. This reflects statistics around disability and paid employment which demonstrate that the employment rate is around 30% lower for disabled than non-disabled people (DWP, 2013). Meanwhile, as described in Chapter Two (section 2.4.2), the current focus of EU and UK disability-focused policy is getting people into work to supposedly facilitate greater inclusion. Paid employment currently has high status in terms of a citizen's contribution to society. Some of the unemployed participants in this research talked about how their pro-environmental behaviours acted as a kind of alternative contribution that they were able to make:

I think you do what you can as a person – I drive a car so limiting journeys, using public transport, making sure rubbish isn't up and down the street, for the kind of local stuff, buying locally and things like that [...] you can live in a bit better place and feel like you're doing your part, particularly as somebody out of the workforce, actually feeling like I can contribute to the greater good is more important than it used to be [...] feeling like I'm pulling my weight in another direction than work. (Participant 12)

For this participant, her environmental action seems positive in terms of enabling her to feel like she is playing a valued part in the community despite being out of employment. This 'need to contribute' was not always experienced so positively, however. Participant 17 described her frame of mind before she was diagnosed with her health condition:

I was still very much in the mind-set of I'm a worthless person because I'm not working, I'm not contributing to the country, therefore the least I can do is... break sweat over digging these stones out [of her garden], so in those days I was much more putting myself at risk in order to do something that made me feel halfway worthwhile [...] it's easier for me [now she has a diagnosis] to say actually no I'm not capable of doing that now.

This account is interesting because it appears to imply a kind of internalised rhetoric which had negative implications for her health. In the context of disabled people being increasingly portrayed as fraudulent 'scroungers' by the media (see for example Briant et al., 2013), her diagnosis now acts as a defence against this kind of internalisation. The idea of pro-environmental behaviour as an alternative form of contribution links back to the idea that contribution carries status (MacGregor, 2006). For others, however, there was tension in a number of accounts around recognition (of additional needs) versus equal treatment (being treated like anyone else):

... there are times when we as disabled people want to be seen like quotes 'everybody else', but there are other times when we want to be special, because we have a need or a particular aspect [...] other considerations that you feel are within that context or within that event, that you do need recognition of.
(Participant 20)

This also relates to the idea of recognition as an aspect of environmental justice. Recognition in terms of a disabled person being able to participate on the same terms as others would in theory have to overcome this tension, because enabling that right to participate would entail avoiding potentially stigmatising 'special' treatment. Relatedly, Participant 20 also described how recognition and being facilitated to contribute to the environment could potentially improve a disabled person's quality of life:

The environmental side, were you allowed to contribute and were you allowed to be part of, would make you feel that it was valued, and make you able to show the value about the environment, the community and your role within it, and therefore would make your quality of life better, and more fulfilling within itself.

Key Informant 02, although not currently identifying as disabled herself, seemed to have come to a similar conclusion to these participants about the value of contribution. Her approach also has resonance with discussions of responsibility and efficacy earlier in this section. Talking about the element of contribution embedded in her approach to sustainable care, she highlighted the importance of active involvement:

One of my primary motivating things as well is that the... residents are not just passive recipients of care but they're actively involved – not just only in their own care decisions because I think that's really quite a minor level, but encouraged to give to the community... I am expecting everyone who's a patient to actually do some work towards the community, unless they're actually unconscious and really unable to [...] people with disabilities are people, and they have their contributions that they can make to society.

Another aspect of contribution outside of work was that a number of participants noted that their environmental impact was accordingly reduced. This is a complex issue. For some participants this was experienced as positive. For others it meant surviving on low incomes, which as discussed in Chapter Six (section 6.1.4), was a potentially oppressive aspect of financial difficulties. Practical aspects were highlighted: not commuting; not travelling during the rush hour; having more time to plan meals and avoid food waste; or

even potentially being able to help retrofit the home for increased environmental sustainability. Additionally, two participants talked about what might be described as improved sustainability of their own health and wellbeing:

I don't think I will ever be able to work fulltime. I've all kinds of reasons for that, but I find it more manageable – when I have had a fulltime job in the past I've got into trouble – it's more manageable for me to work part time. (Participant 11)

This is significant. The Coalition government plans to introduce conditionality for part-time workers as well as those who are unemployed (Dwyer and Wright, 2014). For some, however, part-time work may be the most sustainable in terms of their health. This may apply to those who do not fit into the narrow categorisations of 'disabled' or having 'limited capability for work' used by the benefit system. Academic investigation has also indicated that for the overall sustainability of society – in social, economic and environmental terms – part-time work may be the best option (Coote and Franklin, 2013; new economics foundation (nef), 2010). Participants in this research who were employed, or had worked fulltime in the past, talked about how this had limited their environmental activities:

If you live somewhere and go out to work 9-5 every day and come back, and you're busy, you kind of can let some stuff slide, and it's not as important to you, whereas if you've got limited finances, you're in all day, or you're much more likely to use a local park or a local cafe, and walk there, or get a bus, [...] and financially you know, it hits you... if you're working you can go out and buy new clothes and stuff, whereas ... you can't just do that sort of thing when you're on a limited income. (Participant 12)

Finally, Key informant 01 pointed out the intersections between time, environmentalism, disability and financial issues:

Having the spare time and spare energy and spare money to do a lot of this environmental stuff is a lot to do with class and money... but that kind of intersects with disabled people having their incomes cut at the moment and generally being on quite low incomes anyway.

Like in Chapter Six, where participants and theorists were predicting a potentially negative future for disabled people, she was pessimistic about the current prospects for the inclusion of those who are unable to work:

Those of us who can't work are going to be increasingly pushed out into shitty environments and places no one wants to be. And increasingly trapped and isolated and unable to have any sort of inclusion within the community [...] a big thing for me is valuing people's contributions for things other than being in paid employment.

All of these issues interlink. Participants in the current research faced disadvantage and low incomes if not in paid employment. They were often able to make more environmental choices, however, because of the extra time they had for the additional labour associated with environmentalism (MacGregor, 2006). For many, this was less about choice than necessity, as seen in Chapter Six (section 6.1). Also, as noted above, to be well sometimes meant making the decision not to work. In this context, environmentalism might be seen as another way of contributing to society. The UK's working hours are currently some of the longest in Europe (Simms and Conisbee, 2013). If, as nef suggests, there needs to be a substantial shift to shorter hours of work for *everyone* for reasons of sustainability, then this could be part of a potential solution to these issues. This will be discussed further in the following chapter. This chapter now moves to a consideration of issues of choice and constraint. This combines themes that have already begun to arise in this analysis and examines how participants understood these issues.

8.4 Choice and constraint

In Chapters Five and Six, it was demonstrated that many participants faced a number of different barriers to living a more sustainable lifestyle. As shown in Chapter Two (section 2.5), the rhetoric of choice is a significant feature of environmental policies in the UK, and it was also a key topic for participants. This section explores how participants talked about the choices they made – or were unable to make.

8.4.1 Choice framings

In describing and reflecting on their experiences, a number of participants used framings relating to choice or lack of choice. Constraints (such as the barriers described in Chapters Five and Six) were also discussed. For a majority of participants, choice was not something they often experienced in relation to enacting pro-environmental behaviours: 'we don't really have the choice of cycling or whatever, cos even if I had a tricycle I couldn't cycle, cos of me legs so, unfortunately I'd have to have a car' (Participant 06). Another example was having little option to avoid excess food packaging: 'I don't have a choice 'cause I can't peel and chop potatoes and start mashing them [...] [so] I'll buy ready chopped and prepared vegetables' (Participant 09).

For both these participants, where accessibility ran counter to pro-environmental behaviours, access was (understandably) the priority. Where certain activities were a necessity in terms of saving money (as noted in Chapter Six section 6.1.4), however, access was sometimes negatively affected. This highlights the potentially disabling effects of some current pro-environmental behaviours. In this context, choice is perhaps an inappropriate way to describe participants' experiences, as this extract indicates:

Participant 05 [...]it's not just it takes a bit more effort to get the bin up the drive to get the recycling done, you actually can't, or if you do, you know you're going to be in pain for days possibly
 Researcher – so it's not a choice actually
 Participant 05 – no it's not really, no – it's not really choice, you think [pause]
 Researcher – I'm just wondering if there are any situations where there are choices
 Participant 05 – yeah, I'm trying to think of choices and I don't know where they are.

Negative framings of choice were not universal, however. A few participants identified things they did choose to do in terms of pro-environmental behaviours, in a similar way to the choices made by Horton's (2006a) participants. This could be as simple as choosing energy saving light bulbs or to do the recycling, or more significant choices in terms of retrofitting a home to be as energy efficient as possible:

I had the cavity wall insulation, [...] I've had double glazing, new doors fitted, [...] I've had all those things done, and I've had things like that done one because environmentally it's good, but also it's a

cost saving to me, I've had a new boiler fitted, which is a more economical environmentally friendly boiler, and I noticed quite a drop in my utility bills – well for gas not for electric, so that's why things like that are important to me [...] that's why I choose home improvements. (Participant 14)

As this quote also shows, environmentalism was not the sole reason for the choice here. Similarly, other participants talked about behaviours that were less damaging for the environment, but identified other reasons (aside from environmental concern or financial necessity) for those choices. Participant 05, for example, talked about comfort as a factor in keeping her thermostat low: 'my house is cooler than most people's [...] that's personal comfort as opposed to that's not an environmental choice...' (Participant 05).

8.4.2 Talking about choices

As well as framing experiences in terms of choice, some participants discussed the concept itself. In some interviews, questions about choice were also explicitly asked. As noted earlier, choice is part of the longstanding rhetoric from government in terms of framing individual responses to environmental issues, and has also been adopted as a key framing for disabled people's definitions of independent living (see for example Morris, 1998). This does not mean that choices are always available in practice, however. Participant 18 highlighted a negative aspect of choice for her, as a person concerned about the environment but facing significant barriers to reducing her individual impact:

Researcher – ... you've mentioned choice a lot – or lack of choice... do you think that's kind of an issue in terms of environmental stuff as well

Participant 18 – yeah I think so, cos like I keep saying over and over again, society, newspapers, surveys, all sort of thing about 'how can you save money, how about doing this, how about doing that' [...] you know for some people, that isn't helpful. I don't need to be reminded that I can't get on a bus, I don't need to be reminded that I travel in a car most of the time on my own...

The impression from accounts such as this was that the messages filtering through about pro-environmental behaviours did not take the issues these disabled people are facing into account. Not all participants responded in the same way, however. As illustrated in the extract below, for Participant 13, whose choices were constrained in many areas, there was something of a mediating effect:

Researcher – do you ever do things like calculate your carbon footprint?

Participant 13 – I've done that, yeah, oh I'm under no illusions as to the impact that my privileged lifestyle has on other people [...] my quality of life – limited though it may be compared to *some* other people in the country, is still environmentally unsustainable and causing huge hardship and death around the rest of the world. Which is a hard thing you have to take on isn't it, really.

Researcher – and particularly when your choice and control is constrained

Participant 13 – to some – yeah, to a large extent, yeah. Maybe having it constrained has made me feel less guilty [laughs]

Participant 13's recognition of his own lack of agency appears here to enable him to resist some of the psycho-emotional aspects of disablism implied in Participant 18's account. By drawing on this aspect of his identity he appears able to resist the negative aspects from the other aspect of identity mentioned: having a 'privileged lifestyle'. That he might otherwise feel more guilty also echoes the idea of value-based environmental citizenship, where this would be a logical response to aspects of lifestyle contrary to one's values (Horton 2006b).

As mentioned above, choice and control are also key concepts in relation to independent living. For Participant 13 this was a central concern for him as a resident of a care home. In his experience, institutional living placed a significant constraint on choices he and fellow residents were able to make. In the course of the interview, the researcher mentioned a previous study (Lovelock, 2010) which found that people living in residential homes in Australia had less control over their environmental impact than those living independently. Responding to this, Participant 13 described how it reflected his own experience:

Yeah, I think it's because you've got less choice and control over every aspect of your life, and environmentalism is one of them [...] I find less so in this home now, but still, and it's especially so in more institutional homes, that choice and control whilst lauded as concepts the reality is trivialised – and paid lip service to. I mean, people say that choice is being able to choose what colour clothes you wear that day, well, that's very important – don't get me wrong I'm not trying to trivialise that – but then there's also choices like whether you get to go out of an evening and have to be back before the night staff start, or living somewhere accessible or – there are so many bigger life choices that get ignored because providers say that they are enabling choice through enabling

people to choose what clothes they wear and if they're lucky what time they get up or have a choice of two meals, for lunchtime [...] the reality is that people... in residential care have very little choice and control over anything in their lives, and that includes their environmental impact.

This extract highlights two important points about choice. Participant 13 was the only one in this research living in residential care, but his account appears to reflect the findings of a larger study including participants living in residential homes. His description of the difference between choices, such as over a person's outfit for the day and their ability to choose to socialise outside the care home, exemplifies the lack of meaningful choice that still affects many disabled people in residential settings today (Swain, 2005). Additionally, disabled people in residential care are likely to be categorised into the 'vulnerable' groups described in sustainability-focused policy documents. Unsurprisingly, then, their lack of choice with regard to environmental impacts currently does not seem to be even recognised as an issue.

Other participants talked about a more general lack of choice. Participant 03 identified constraint from government in terms of what individuals could do to look after the environment: 'it's the government that tells us what we can and we can't do isn't it, at the end of the day, we haven't got a choice really'. Participant 11, asked about the extent to which she felt her environmental decisions were within her control, noted that 'we do make choices, but those choices are very constrained'. Participant 17 talked about how limited energy – for disabled and non-disabled people – constrained choices:

Each individual has to choose where they spend their energies, so you know there's many more things to spend your energy on than lobbying government over environmental issues, there's many other issues to lobby government on for one thing, and then there's many more things apart from lobbying government to spend your energies on.

Participant 13 linked this into the wider context of the issues focused on by campaigners. He speculated that this might be a reason why environmental campaigners are not often knowledgeable about disability issues. Capacity in terms of energy levels can also, however, be a spectrum that transcends a disabled/non-disabled binary.

Finally, Participant 19 talked about choosing convenience:

I could still make better choices, regardless of disability or not – but I suppose sometimes it's easier to fall back on convenience isn't it, you know because that's kind of what makes life easier, what makes life simpler you know, you've kind of had a long day at work, you kind of don't want to make the more environmentally friendly choice because you think 'oh I just wanna get this done and dusted'.

This is also an issue of accessibility, however. Participant 19 described doing all his shopping in one supermarket that was accessible as opposed to using a number of different (and possibly more environmentally conscious, but less accessible) local shops. It also reflects a wider issue that short-term concerns – such as convenience or cost – tend to be prioritised by individuals over broader and more abstract concerns about environmental issues (Webb, 2012). Additionally, this relates back to considerations of time and work, discussed earlier, which affects both disabled and non-disabled individuals.

8.4.3 Balancing accessibility and sustainability

Many of the choices discussed above – and other issues raised in these analysis chapters, such as financial constraints – might be described as containing tensions between issues of access and concern for environmental sustainability. Examples include tensions between rights and responsibilities or between saving money on home-cooking but then having no energy left for other things. Some issues where choice was not explicitly discussed might also be categorised in this way. Participant 05, who was asked about the issue of tensions, described it as an issue of necessity: 'I think there is a tension. I have to go along with what I can physically do which makes me feel quite selfish'. For another participant it was the use of taxis for mobility:

Participant 01 – I think I get too many taxis, but... I do that out of what I think I need to do, cos I have limited mobility

Researcher – so it's an access need

Participant 01 – yeah, an access need, yeah, but it does make me feel a bit bad, cos I feel like it's a bit wasteful, like not walking somewhere that's quite near

These experiences reflect those of the disabled bloggers (mentioned in Chapters One and Six) who described how they had internalised environmental messages about individual responsibility which led to feelings of guilt – what they described as 'ecodisablism' (disabledmedic, 2013). Participant 01 talks

about the wastefulness of using a taxi for a journey others might walk – despite it being necessary for her due to limited mobility. Similarly Participant 05 describes feeling selfish for living within the physical limits of her body (other parts of her account detailed the pain that she lives with on a daily basis). Both these examples might be described as experiences of ecodisablism. What all these individuals are experiencing, however, could also be cast as a failure of the environmental movement and environmental policy. This is the failure to address social sustainability to the same extent that, respectively, environmental or economic sustainability are emphasised. It is also a failure in terms of focusing on individuals and concentrating on the norm rather than taking account of difference and more structural effects (see also Kennedy et al., 2014).

Other balancing acts were more difficult to solve. For Participant 17, the tension identified was between what was best for her physical health and what was most helpful for her mental health in relation to gardening:

Mentally it's very good to do that, but for me physically, it's like having two opposing conditions, one which needs me to stop and rest, and let my joints rest, and the other one which needs me to go out and be active and getting fresh air and that kind of thing. And you know if you do one you hurt the other, and vice versa, so it is constantly a catch 22.

This example does not have an easy solution. Elsewhere in her account, however, Participant 17 describes the difficulties of getting by on a low income and the problems she faces living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood with a neglectful housing association. As she suggests, an improvement in her housing situation would also be helpful for her mental health, for example.

Finally, we return to Participant 19's discussion of choosing convenience (described at the end of the last section). The balance was between his concern over the environmental issues around supermarkets and his more immediate access needs:

Participant 19 – [you're] aware that there's probably better ways to shop... and maybe I should investigate them more. Cos supermarkets as a whole are not particularly environmentally driven are they

Researcher – No. But they are quite accessible

Participant 19 – Yeah, they are quite accessible. And this is the thing! You know that's the thing. Particularly Asda I go to, because

basically I know I can park straight outside, it's all flat... and then basically I can go round with the trolley and pick up stuff [...] I think it's about that's the most accessible way for me to do it.

This also fitted in with his wider narrative of managing to live independently (he had recently moved away from his family) and holding down a fulltime job. He also discussed the relative inaccessibility of local shops. As noted earlier, 'convenience' in this sense was a relevant issue and also a tension that might be experienced by non-disabled as well as disabled individuals.

The issues described here again highlight the problem of focusing on individuals and individual actions, and reflect the need – as described in the previous chapter – for a wider consideration of the activities relevant to this research. This is a broad ask because, as demonstrated, the relevant activities include issues like employment as well as more traditional 'environmentally'-related behaviours regarding transport, domestic provisioning and so on. Sustainability (or lack of it) is implicated in all of these due to its threefold dimensions of social, economic and environmental. Focusing on one to the detriment of another will lead to ineffective solutions that may additionally close off the potential for more effective holistic possibilities. Again, this will be discussed further in the following chapter. Now, however, the chapter alters focus. In line with the majority of participants' concern for their responsibilities to be balanced with those of government, it now explores what participants considered to be the role of government – both local and national. First, however, it is relevant to revisit the local policy context and consider its implications for disabled people.

8.5 Local policy

As noted in Chapter Four, examining local sustainability- and disability-focused policies, and situating participants' experiences in relation to these, was a key aim of this research. The local context was explored in depth in relation to recycling and travel in Chapter Seven. The Local Council had policies and strategies relevant to a number of issues and experiences described by

participants. A table listing the different policies examined can be found in Appendix I.

Much significant disability-focused policy and legislation is decided at national level – for example the Equality Act (2010) or the Care Act (2014). Similarly, the majority of welfare benefits addressing disability – for example ESA, DLA and PIP – are administered nationally. At the local level, therefore, a significant amount of Leeds City Council responsibility in terms of disability issues is for social care. Disability issues are also addressed in transport and some other sustainability-focused policies. There is more broad-ranging sustainability-focused policy at the local level, however. Leeds has various overarching strategies, such as the 'Vision for Leeds', that reference sustainability issues. Additionally, there is a Climate Change strategy and strategies for green spaces, waste, and affordable warmth. These variously reference the national policy documents they relate to, for example the Waste strategy (Leeds City Council, 2005) refers to both UK and EU waste targets.

Sustainability was a key theme across Adult Social Care documents, in terms of enabling people to live independently and remain healthy as long as possible. Alongside aims such as promoting independence and increasing choice, however, were discussions about cuts to local authority funding which were affecting service provision. While acknowledged, this was also framed in terms of targeting support 'where it's needed most' (Leeds City Council, 2013, p.8). This implies that cuts are being made from less essential services - or a tightening of eligibility similar to that seen at the national level. The concept of 'vulnerability' also arose on a number of occasions throughout overarching and disability-specific documents. While the term was often used uncritically, in a few instances (for example the 2012 Adult Social Care Local Account) it was highlighted that vulnerability was dependent on circumstances rather than an inherent characteristic: 'people whose circumstances make them vulnerable' (Leeds City Council, 2012, p.2). The local documents tend to focus on those who are unable to work. Language of independence, choice and control is often in evidence. This may be due to the national level policy and strategy on employment. Where people can work, however, there is also discussion of training opportunities and the benefits of employment.

In the sustainability-focused documents, meanwhile, there were a number of policy expectations of local authority residents:

- Making use of active travel modes (cycling, walking)
- Using more public transport
- Reduction in private car journeys
- Avoiding travelling by working flexibly (as a long-term aim)
- Taking energy saving measures in the home
- Volunteering at and/or becoming members of 'friends of' parks
- Using 'real' nappies for small children
- Greater levels of recycling

Additionally, a number of issues facing disabled residents were highlighted:

- The need for advice and funding for disabled and other vulnerable residents regarding the aim to protect against fuel poverty
- Disabled access to local parks and green spaces
- Greater access for disabled people in terms of active transport modes – attractive, safer environments, the need for more dropped kerbs and pedestrian routes accessible to disabled people
- Accessible recycling facilities – particularly in new build housing
- General accessibility of new-build housing e.g. Lifetime Homes Standard

Aspects of environmental justice can be identified in these policies, such as the focus on fuel poverty. Most of the issues identified in policy facing disabled residents were also highlighted by participants in this research. Compared to the policy expectations, however, many of the barriers are not fully addressed. A key example is the gap between avoiding fuel poverty and taking energy saving measures in the home. This was indicated by participants living in social housing who had experienced botched or incomplete renovations. The council therefore does not appear to be living up to its aims. Similarly, while the aims for accessible housing and recycling are laudable, they are voluntary. They also only apply to new homes, not to the vast amount of existing housing stock.

Access to parks and green spaces was mentioned in the policy documents, but there were no specific ideas to address this, limiting confidence that solutions will be enacted. While accessible public transport may in some respects be an issue for national rather than local government, that no access improvements

were suggested or noted as needed by local policies seems like an omission. It is positive, though, that the need for accessible local street spaces was highlighted. This latter issue may also reflect the influence of a local campaign, highlighted by Participant 07 and championed by local disability groups, called 'Pavements are for People' (described in Chapter Five). It aims to improve the accessibility of pedestrian space and raise awareness of common but disabling practices such as parking on pavements, cluttered street furniture or wheelie bins left in the middle of pavements.

Finally, it was positive to see more crossover between active representations of disability from disability-focused documents to sustainability-focused documents. For example, there was some acknowledgement of disabled people as actors (for example doing recycling and using public spaces) rather than just passively receiving services. This contrasts with representations in national sustainability-focused documents, as highlighted in Chapter Two. What is not mentioned in local-level sustainability-focused policies (and only partially addressed in disability-focused policies), however, is the impact that local service/funding cuts will have on local disabled people. This has been raised by a number of participants as a potential or already existing barrier to their environmental participation (in Chapters Five and Six). With the ongoing austerity measures from central government, it seems likely that these effects may intensify.

8.6 Role of government

Participants were asked about the role of local and national government in promoting environmentalism. They also sometimes chose to talk about government spontaneously in terms of responsibility for the environment. There seemed to be a general feeling that environmental issues were not a priority for national government: 'I think the government has to have a responsibility as well, and I think the government have slowly cut back on their responsibilities' (Participant 16).

There was more of a mix of opinions on local government. Generally, waste collection was the main issue discussed in terms of local services. Social housing and the upkeep of green spaces were also mentioned. Some identified positive aspects such as a pilot food waste collection in some areas, or assistance with bins (although as noted in previous chapters, for others this experience had not been so positive). Those with knowledge of other areas also suggested that provision they had seen for recycling and public transport was better elsewhere, however. There was often a sense from individual interview participants as well as some of the focus groups that the local council could do more, as illustrated by this focus group extract:

Researcher – what do government, what do local council do to look after the environment?
 FGP5 not a lot
 FGP3 – not a lot
 FGP1 – well they empty the bins
 FGP7 – as little as poss!
 FGP4 – I think the council could do a hell of a lot more
 [agreement]
 (FG2 participants)

This reflects to some extent findings from older research with UK residents about environmental concerns (Macnaghten et al., 1995). Macnaghten and colleagues' participants demonstrated distrust of local government and a general perception of its lack of influence over environmental issues.

In addition, a number of participants described cuts to local services, such as funding being withdrawn and staff cuts affecting mental health services, as well as cuts to or reductions in benefits that have already been mentioned.

Participant 11 noted that her garden waste bin had stopped being collected, meaning they now had to drive waste to the tip. Participant 17 described how cuts to health and social care were having a noticeable impact on the social workers she was involved with in terms of stress levels. She also highlighted that the independent advocacy service she accessed had experienced reductions in funding to the extent that only two advocacy staff remained.

As noted above there was a lack of mention in the local documents, and back in Chapter Two national documents, about the impacts of these funding cuts for disabled people. It seems likely, however, that cuts such as those described by Participant 11 reduce access in terms of participating in pro-environmental

behaviours. Meanwhile, benefit cuts and cuts to support services more generally could both exacerbate impairment as well as reduce general accessibility, which would also indirectly impact on access to environmental activities. Therefore the impact of cuts is potentially negative for both disability equality and sustainability.

8.7 Talking about citizenship

As noted at the start of this chapter, interview questions generally avoided the term 'citizenship' itself. A few participants did use the term spontaneously, however, and with a few more it seemed relevant for the researcher to introduce the concept during the interview. Although expressed in different ways, a common theme for all these participants was the element of responsibility or obligation in citizenship. For example, citizenship came up early in Participant 12's interview, when asked about her involvement in any campaigning activity:

I think campaigning, and standing up and being counted, is just part of being a citizen – about being a human being... it's hard to kind of join in with big campaigns but supporting 'em when they come along is really good.

This statement is particularly significant if considered in the context of questions of contribution and capacity discussed earlier in the chapter. Participant 12 describes citizenship as 'about being a human being', but then links this to making a contribution in terms of 'standing up and being counted'. This kind of sentiment is reflected in republican citizenship theories where disabled people have often been positioned outside citizenship because of an assumed inability to contribute. Any conception of citizenship based on contribution will by its nature be exclusive because it is only granted to those who can meet its standards (Beckett, 2006b).

The concept of citizenship was also raised with Participant 13. Although it was not language he chose to use, his response to a question about environmental citizenship indicated an understanding that seemed to fit in with a more republican-style focus on individualised responsibility and contribution:

Researcher – [...] I don't know if you're aware of any of kind of things like environmental citizenship and any of these kinds of ideas

Participant 13 – yeah... it's part of your everyday responsibility to be environmentally aware isn't it, is that

Understandings of citizenship as obligation contrast with a more social liberal account of citizenship that considers it a status (Beckett, 2006b). These understandings also reinforce the focus on responsibility rather than rights displayed by most participants in this research. A few participants were asked about citizenship specifically in relation to disabled people. In response to this, some participants emphasised disabled people's capacity. Participant 14's response seems to imply that some disabled people might be only limited by their own attitudes:

Researcher – to what extent do you feel like disabled people can be good citizens in [an environmental] sense – to what extent is it accessible, or

Participant 14 – I don't see that it makes any difference, I think it's the attitude of mind that you have, about the area that you live in and how you want it to be, and I don't like to say it, but there are some disabled people that are still of the opinion 'oh I can't do that, you need to do it for me, I'm disabled'.

For another participant, the concept was more problematic. The idea of a good citizen or an 'environmental citizen' – as described by the researcher – seemed to be a new idea. To him, however, it did not seem to be particularly convincing – or practical – as demonstrated by this extract:

Participant 19 – well I'm just trying to think about what you'd deem as being a good citizen. That you recycle, that you kind of use certain things, I suppose, it's an idea, but...

Researcher – I guess the question I was gonna ask is that if there is that idea of a good environmental citizen, then to what extent are disabled people able to be that good environmental citizen at the moment

Participant 19 – I would say it's difficult. Because obviously... you've gotta prioritise things haven't you, as a disabled person, and it's hard enough kind of living independently I think, within the constraints of society – without then thinking about 'how can I be a good citizen'.

It is interesting to reflect on these two contrasting perspectives, particularly if set in context of their relative experiences of barriers. Participant 14's account was generally a story of (facilitated) access, whereas Participant 19 encountered significant barriers in many areas. It is possible that these differing experiences

may have impacted on the two participants' understandings. It is not possible to do more than speculate in this regard, however, and it is another issue that would benefit from further investigation. It is also interesting to note how Participant 19 responded to a question that may have implied a conception of 'environmental citizen' as one with responsibilities more than rights. He seems to resist this notion with his description of the barriers disabled people face in everyday life as being enough to contend with. Although not explicitly talking about rights, this extract does echo the idea that because disabled people do not yet have equal access there should not be a requirement for equal responsibility.

A slightly different slant is employed here because the argument is that disabled people's responsibility is different because there is more being put into simply 'living independently', so perhaps the contribution in terms of society has already been fulfilled. This also reflects Barnes' (2003b) provocative idea that 'work' for disabled people might be defined more widely in terms of the extra labour disabled people face as a consequence of a disabling society. In the context of talking about responsibility, however, this perspective was not the norm. The majority of participants (including Participant 19 in some instances) placed emphasis on their own responsibilities with regard to addressing environmental issues.

This chapter now returns to the theoretical literature to explore its relationship with participant accounts and the extent to which the concept of environmental citizenship is relevant and appropriate for further explaining participants' lived experiences.

8.8 Environmental citizenship and understandings

In Chapter Three, some mainstream accounts and critiques of environmental citizenship were set out and a new critique was begun from a disability studies perspective. Dobson and Bell were identified as key theorists on environmental citizenship, writing from broadly republican and liberal perspectives. Their theories have been subject to critique by various writers because they appear to

take a somewhat reductionist stance on who might qualify for environmental citizenship. Their description is universalist and fails to recognise the different situations of different individuals. In particular, however, both give descriptions that are more concerned with the potential environmental citizen's values than their actions (although actions are also mentioned). As noted in Chapters Three and Seven, this means that people who qualify as environmental citizens under these definitions may still have large environmental impacts. The concept of an 'environmental citizen' also appeared in another strand of research. This was less concerned with theorising the concept (understood to be individuals enacting pro-environmental behaviours) than with how these so-called environmental citizens might be facilitated to act.

It is relevant to consider whether or not participants in this research can be considered 'environmental citizens' by any of the understandings of the concept discussed in existing literature. This is because the idea that disabled people *can* play an active role in protecting the environment – as opposed to just being 'victims' or even ignored completely by much of the academic literature – is central to this research. Relatedly, it would also go some way to justifying the inclusion of a focus on disability equality in both the political environmental citizenship literature and in social practice and pro-environmental behaviours approaches. Finally, it is relevant because of the identification of an 'assumed environmental citizen' within sustainability-focused policies. This highlights the importance of considering how disabled people's experiences might offer a critique of mainstream sustainability-focused policy rhetoric and possibly a template for a reconsideration of this model.

8.8.1 Understandings of environmental concerns

Disabled people's understandings of environment and environmental concerns have rarely been fully considered. Findings from earlier environmental research with disabled people (described in Chapter One section 1.6, such as that by Adebowale et al., 2009, or Burningham and Thrush, 2003) suggested that understandings of environment were often limited to the immediate or local context. More recent research (Abbott and Porter, 2013) has encountered somewhat broader knowledge, however. There is mixed evidence around the

changes in public awareness of broader environmental issues such as climate change. Environmental concern apparently reduced over the latter half of the last decade (Pidgeon, 2012), so change over time is not easy to estimate. Dependent on their experiences, however, some disabled people may also have a somewhat different perspective on environmental issues than the broader population. This may be due to a general experience of barriers rather than access. It may also relate to broader issues such as discrimination in the education system and inaccessible information leading to fewer opportunities to learn about wider environmental concerns (Charles and Thomas, 2007).

Conversely, environmental concerns and understandings may also be considered an indication of privilege, in that the time and energy to consider issues beyond immediate survival needs may not be available to everyone. As Finkelstein's quote in Chapter Six highlighted, 'Most disabled people are struggling to survive day by day. You can't think about world capitalism if you can't get out of the house' (in Horsler, 2003, p.56). This sentiment might be applied to global environmental concerns also and may explain why previous researchers only found limited concerns. Through their narrow sampling of disabled people, however, those researchers seem to have missed the fact that some disabled people – despite facing barriers – can and do hold complex environmental understandings and concerns.

In this piece of research a range of understandings were demonstrated, reflecting the diversity of participants' experiences. Some participants in the focus groups did express similar levels of awareness and concern as those described in earlier research:

P1 – I don't know what it really means, environment can just be – well it's everything around you isn't it? Everything!

P2 – the earth

P1 – doesn't specifically mean trees, grass, anything like that, it means the whole world that's going on around you

P3 – might even mean where you live

(Participants FG3)

This was followed by a discussion that rarely strayed from local topics. It is interesting to consider, however, whether this was due to a genuine lack of knowledge on behalf of participants or a product of the focus group context itself. It is relevant that both Burningham and Thrush (2001) and Adebowale and colleagues (2009) used focus groups for their research. Focus groups can

produce 'normative discourses' where participants may be reluctant to oppose a group norm and potentially expose themselves to judgement from their peers (Smithson, 2000). Given the contested nature of environmental issues generally, they could be a candidate for a normative discourse. Furthermore, all the focus groups generating limited knowledge (including those for the current research) were carried out in general disability settings. The one focus group for the current research that took place in an environmental organisation produced a slightly different response. In this group, the understandings articulated reflected the conservation focus of the organisation they were part of. This may also indicate general knowledge differences between people for who are already interested in a topic versus those for whom it is less relevant.

Interview participants also demonstrated a range of different understandings, from the straightforward to the sophisticated. Many had detailed understandings, including two who had achieved or were pursuing postgraduate-level qualifications related to environmental issues. Awareness and concerns ranged from the broad to the specific and from the local to the global. Some participants led off with ideas such as climate change, while for others contextualising environment and separating the immediate from the abstract was the first concern. These findings demonstrate that disabled people are not a homogenous group when it comes to environmental concerns, and that there is nothing intrinsic to disabled people's understandings of environmental issues in this regard.

8.8.2 Environmental citizens?

As noted in Chapter Three, the feature of environmental citizenship most emphasised by Dobson and Bell (2006) is an understanding of 'the common good' and prioritising this over self-interest. Flynn and colleagues (2008) found little evidence of this sentiment in their UK-based focus group research. They concluded that their participants could not be characterised as environmental citizens despite demonstrating awareness and concern for environmental issues. Additionally, their sense of responsibility in terms of taking action was often related to self-interest, for example relating to financial costs. In the current research, however, the most commonly-cited concern of participants

was for future generations. This may be argued to satisfy the criterion of prioritising a common good over self-interest.

Other criteria in Dobson's and Bell's descriptions were also variously met by different participants, so many have a claim to environmental citizenship based on these definitions. Of course, Dobson also follows up his definition by suggesting that environmental citizenship is 'a set of substantive practices aimed at environmental sustainability' (Dobson, 2010, p.7). Given a lack of further detail about these practices, and the significant number of behaviours most individual interview participants in this research did engage with (described in Chapter Five), by this criterion they may also be said meet the definition. Dobson and Bell did not provide the sole definition of 'environmental citizen', however. A not insubstantial literature (discussed in Chapter Three) uses the term without the baggage of political theory, focusing instead on the issue of individual responsibility. It is also possible to call participants in this research environmental citizens in the sense that the majority of them pursued environmental activities in some way and emphasised individual responsibility, as discussed earlier in this chapter. It is perhaps not surprising that this research contains so many environmental citizens. The focus of the topic and advertisements relied on participants being interested enough in environmental issues to come forward to take part. Despite the potential for over-representation, however, these findings are still important, because no previous research has considered that disabled people as well as non-disabled may also be environmental citizens.

8.9 Summary

This chapter has explored participants' attitudes to various issues relevant to the topic of environmental citizenship. Although there were differences in the opinions of various participants, a significant finding was that no participants seemed to accept the idea of rights in relation to the environment, except where balanced by responsibilities. Similarly, a number of participants emphasised the importance of contribution to society. Others, however, highlighted that

contribution (in terms of reducing environmental impact) was not possible for all disabled people. Additionally, an approach based on contribution may neglect the transformative element of multidimensional disability equality. Choice, a key focus of policy rhetoric, was problematic in some circumstances but positive in others. The relevance of local policy as well as participants' opinions of local and national government were also explored.

This chapter additionally highlighted some of the tensions participants faced in terms of balancing access and environmental impact in contexts where disability equality and sustainability have not been adequately synthesised. Participants demonstrated a range of understandings and concern for environmental issues and many could be identified as environmental citizens, despite the many barriers highlighted in the previous findings chapters. The next and final chapter will consider the implications of these findings, exploring the issues raised in more depth and reflecting on the potential for enabling sustainable lifestyles across the population.

9 Discussion – Enabling Sustainable Lifestyles?

This final chapter summarises and bring to a close the investigation of the research questions (at least in relation to this thesis). It presents such conclusions as can be drawn from this research. It has taken an intentionally broad approach to consider the inclusion of disability equality in relation to sustainability in the UK context. Chapters One, Two, and Three explored the constructions of disability equality and sustainability in different discourses (Research Question One). Chapter Two explored these constructions in policy discourses and set the context for considering whether current policy addresses or compounds the issues faced by disabled people (Research Question Three). Chapter Three began to consider the extent to which theories of environmental justice and environmental citizenship might accommodate disabled people's experiences regarding sustainable lifestyles (Research Question Four). Chapter Four primarily set out the methodology for answering Research Question Two, how disabled people experience environmental issues in everyday life, which was then investigated in Chapters Five to Eight.

To recap, social understandings of both disability equality and sustainability (discussed in Chapter One) were adopted for this thesis. They are considered vital for understanding the exclusion disabled people face with regard to sustainable lifestyles. In policy and academic fields focusing on sustainability in relation to the UK context, disability has tended to be ignored or treated as an individual tragedy and, more generally, social aspects of sustainability have been underemphasised in relation to environmental or economic aspects. All three, however, are vital for fully achieving sustainability, and the social aspect, incorporating concerns of justice, is also foundational for addressing aims of disability equality.

9.1 Disabled people's experiences of environmental issues in everyday life

Research Question Two, and its sub-questions, have been extensively addressed in the empirical Chapters Five to Eight. Although the accounts in this research focus on disabled people's experiences in a particular geographical and policy context, it was possible to identify some potential similarities and differences with other areas through the key informants. The findings suggest significantly more complexity regarding access to sustainable lifestyles than has been demonstrated in previous research, and that a larger-scale investigation of disabled people's access needs around issues of sustainability could be of value. Investigating experiences more broadly in the UK or in other global north contexts, for example, could provide a fruitful direction for future research. Despite the small scale, some findings in this research may also still be relevant for policy. For example, while all the barriers for disabled people identified in local policy were experienced by participants, they did not cover the range of issues participants discussed. Similarly, national policies setting out expectations of citizens, as exemplified by the DEFRA Sustainable Lifestyles framework (Defra 2011d), were fairly comprehensive but did not capture the full range of activities participants were engaged in. This indicates that policy does not yet reflect the full picture of citizens' engagement with environmental issues. In particular, disabled people's potential engagement seems to be overlooked. A central aim of this thesis was to highlight disabled people's lived experiences with regard to the issues of disability equality and sustainability raised in the literature review chapters. As discussed, theoretical and policy discourses around sustainability that ignore or demonstrate a limited understanding of disability equality are likely to have implications for how issues of sustainability are experienced and negotiated by individuals and groups in their everyday lives. This seems to be borne out by the empirical findings. In Chapters Five and Six, participants raised access issues in relation to sustainable lifestyles, indicating a variety of barriers faced regarding pro-environmental behaviours. These could be broadly categorised as physical, organisational, financial and social barriers.

It seemed that many participants were facing a struggle to navigate sustainable lifestyles and the accessibility needs that sometimes conflicted with these. This was rarely due to intrinsic conflicts, however. Most could be interpreted as a product of disablism – such as facing discrimination from drivers or other

passengers when attempting to use public transport, and/or ableism – such as inaccessible spaces and objects that were designed for non-disabled embodiments. Additionally, while physical and organisational categories only described barriers, financial and social factors could be either barriers or facilitators of pro-environmental behaviours depending on the individual's circumstances. This demonstrates diversity among the participants in this research, and highlights the need to consider the diversity of the disabled population when designing solutions to access issues.

Some participants had specifically considered how their lifestyles – or those of disabled people more generally – could be made more accessible and sustainable. From creating individual workarounds (Participant 06, section 5.2.1.2) to considering the contribution disabled people can make to the environmental movement more widely (Key informant 03, section 6.2.2.4), there were a number of ideas. Moreover, as indicated by the accounts of individual responsibility, a majority of participants suggested that they should be actively involved in contributing toward more sustainable lifestyles. Pro-environmental behaviours were viewed by some as an alternative form of contribution to society. Conversely, most participants expected pro-environmental contribution of everyone (with the exception of those most severely disabled), as discussed in Chapter Eight.

Participants demonstrated a range of understandings with regard to environmental concerns, as discussed in Chapter Eight. Discussions ranged from a straightforward focus on the immediate built environment through to those with postgraduate qualifications in sustainability-related fields. While participants in this research are not – nor were intended to be – a representative group of disabled people, this indicates that previous research which found *only* limited environmental knowledge did not reveal the full picture of disability experiences. Similarly, the diversity of participants' engagements with sustainable lifestyles, and different barriers experienced in different contexts, highlights diversity and the need to take account of heterogeneity in any group labelled 'disabled'.

9.2 Complexity

This thesis has highlighted complexity in a number of areas. Noted in both the literature reviews and the empirical research, disabled people living in the UK are likely to be implicated in injustice (because of larger than equitable ecological footprints) as well as experiencing oppression (in terms of exclusion from environmental issues). This was articulated by some participants. It is also significant, however, because of how disabled people have been invisible, or characterised as 'vulnerable', in sustainability-focused policies. As discussed above, however, many participants in this research demonstrated active engagement with sustainable lifestyles as well as describing barriers they faced. Participants also drew on different experiences to express opinions on issues such as responsibility for the environment, and there was diversity in terms of understandings of environmental concerns. All these different aspects highlight the heterogeneity of experiences among disabled people (even within a small group of disabled people who are all geographically and administratively co-located). This in turn reveals the need to be wary of 'administrative' categories of disability (Charles and Thomas, 2007).

The complexity of environmental choices was also highlighted in the empirical research. One aspect of this was debates in participants' accounts over which behaviours might have environmental impacts. Different styles of gardening and different 'ethical' choices (such as between fair-trade and organic) when shopping were highlighted. More implicitly, decisions between accessibility and environmentalism made by different participants in their everyday lives were also characterised by complexity. One example was the trade-off between convenience, access and the debatable environmental impact of supermarket shopping. This kind of complexity reflects the more fundamental complexity around differing and contested understandings of disability equality and sustainability, and the differing implications of these understandings for identifying and addressing the relevant issues.

The issues around addressing disability equality and sustainability seem to fit Rittel and Webber's (1973) definitions of 'wicked problems' (discussed in Chapter One). At first consideration, therefore, they may appear unsolvable. The search for solutions to these issues will always be contestable, and

suggested solutions will always be inherently political and thus must be understood as such. This is not to say that solutions are unattainable, however. Head and Alford (2013) suggest that there is more than one type of wicked problem, but that different strategies for tackling them may be more or less helpful; different responses may be relevant in different contexts. In particular they highlight how many established public sector approaches are not sufficient to tackle wicked problems. Many of the features of modern public sector organisations work against, rather than toward, solutions.

More collaborative, cooperative and non-hierarchical approaches, by contrast, may have more success because they have the potential to recruit and include a diverse range of actors and understandings. Similarly, increased communication between different actors and trust between those involved in any collaborations will increase the potential for sharing knowledge.

Alternatively, new forms of leadership or managerial infrastructures could challenge established ways of working. Understanding these different factors is crucial for any attempt to work towards solutions for wicked problems and the different strategies may lead, if not to solutions, then at least realistic ways forward (Head and Alford, 2013). This research has primarily focused on identifying the difficulties faced by disabled people and explanations for these. Future research could usefully build on this to further examine potential solutions, and therefore the role of the public sector may be another fruitful avenue of inquiry. There are also links with complexity and the current and potential policy offerings, which will be examined in the next section.

9.3 The contribution of policy

Another idea central to this thesis was that constructions of disability equality and sustainability in policy discourses indicate the assumptions underlying current policy initiatives. As shown in Chapter Two, although UK policy defines disability as a social issue in government rhetoric, the implications of various policies treat disability as an individual problem. Similarly, disability equality and sustainability are both addressed primarily through economic means, with employment central to disability inclusion while sustainability is predicated upon

economic growth. Neoliberal explanations can be seen to underlie government policies, with citizens positioned as active, rational and choice-making individuals. The exceptions to this are disabled people in sustainability-focused policies, who are often positioned as 'vulnerable' or in need of protection. Because of neoliberalism's links with a weak sustainability paradigm, proposals for ensuring sustainability are not particularly ambitious. Similarly, because neoliberalism is implicated in the perpetuation of disability, while activation-style social policies might work for some it is unlikely that disability equality would be fully achieved within a neoliberal framework. Current policy is therefore not addressing the issues faced by disabled people with regard to sustainability.

Additionally, pre-empting the discussion of environmental citizenship later in this chapter, Dobson suggests that any success of environmental citizenship in the UK 'is heavily reliant on government support' (Dobson, 2010, p.69). The concept of situated environmental citizenship is therefore relevant, i.e. that advocated by MacGregor (2006) or Middlemiss (2010) where society or government enables the enactment of environmental responsibilities. Within a neoliberal economic context, however, situated environmental citizenship runs the risk of leading to 'activation' style environmental policies. This could happen in a similar vein to the active employment policies that have arisen in the EU and UK in recent years (Van Berkel et al., 2002). An activation-style environmental policy could have significant implications for disabled people. Active employment policies have been shown to be largely ineffective (and potentially further disabling) to disabled people (Holmqvist, 2009). It is reasonable to assume that 'active' environmental policies might have the same effects.

There may be some progress to be made inside a neoliberal paradigm, however. For those who might be able to work with the removal of disabling barriers and the provision of appropriate support, existing policy does to some extent offer the opportunity for inclusion in employment. This has recently been threatened, however, by the austerity measures imposed by the Coalition government, such as restricted eligibility for disability benefits in the Welfare Reform Act (2012). Similarly, it is possible to create significant reductions in carbon emissions through measures that are economically beneficial or cost-neutral, such as energy efficiency measures (see for example Gouldson et al.,

2012). Again, however, this is potentially at risk given the Coalition government appears to be reducing its focus on 'green' issues. The problem with progress *within* a neoliberal framework is that it can also close down options for more radical change. This may be problematic both for disabled people and the state of the environment. This is a problem of the incrementalist approach, and is discussed by Rittel and Webber (1973) regarding features of wicked problems. If an attempt at a solution is made that is too small or does not target a high enough 'level' – in relation to the potential cause of the issue – this can disrupt the ability to address larger or higher-level issues. As they argue, 'marginal improvement does not guarantee overall improvement' (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p.165).

There are examples of this from disability studies literature and sustainability research. With regard to disability, some theorists have suggested that even if society successfully integrated the majority of disabled people into economic productivity, those still unable to contribute in this way might face further and greater exclusion (Abberley, 2002). Similarly, Gouldson and colleagues (2012) have noted that taking 'easy' – i.e. cost effective or cost neutral – environmental actions to reduce carbon emissions will go some way to meeting emissions targets. These actions, however, will also make it harder to make the larger (economic and social) changes that would enable the 80% emissions reduction to comply with the target set by the Climate Change Act (2008).

This creates a difficult paradox given that the neoliberal paradigm currently shows few signs of disintegrating (Schmidt and Thatcher, 2013; Cahill, 2011). It therefore would seem unrealistic to propose ideas outside the paradigm of neoliberalism. Nonetheless, its limiting potential needs to be highlighted to promote and provoke critical reflection among policy makers to be transparent about the underlying aspirations for policy. There are no easy solutions, but exploring avenues of resistance – such as those areas of the environmental movement not co-opted by neoliberal rhetoric – might be a potential starting point. Also, the risks presented above – such as increasing exclusion for some disabled people even with the use of accessible employment policies, or the potential consequences of not meeting GHG emission reduction targets (see IPCC, 2013) – should be made clear.

What also seems clear, from the findings of the literature reviews and empirical research in this thesis, is that the current status quo is not sustainable. Disabled people are at risk of or already experiencing environmental injustices (Wolbring, 2009), such as increased impacts of environmental damage as well as pro-environmental measures. Disabled people in the UK, by virtue of being members of the wider population, are also implicated in causing environmental damage due to having unsustainable ecological footprints in terms of global equity (Caird and Roy, 2010). Meanwhile, increasing levels of CO₂ are leading to increasing global warming which – if unaddressed – is predicted to have substantial ecological impacts within the century (IPCC, 2013). More broadly, as has been demonstrated by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), nations with high levels of income inequality face a variety of increased social problems. Morris (2011) points out that these broader inequalities are relevant for disabled people because they characterise the context within which disability inequality is being experienced. Therefore, achieving some level of disability equality in an otherwise unequal society would not solve all the difficulties faced by disabled people; it would only be partial, lacking the transformative dimension of equality (Fredman, 2011). Dorling (2010) argues that increased levels of consumption (and therefore environmental damage) can also be linked to income inequality. Similarly, ‘inequality in human development’ (Neumayer, 2011, p.2) can also be linked to unsustainability. Income inequality in the UK grew rapidly the 1980s and has remained relatively high since the turn of the century. Although there have been some fluctuations due to recent economic crises, this trend does not appear to be changing (ONS, 2014).

All these factors point toward an unequal society that is damaging to the environment as well as creating difficulties for disabled people. It has also been highlighted that increased environmental problems will likely increase the difficulties faced by disabled people (Wolbring, 2009). This means that doing nothing is not an option. Solutions emerging from outside the policy arena, therefore, should be explored for their potential to create change. One aspect of this, as mentioned above, is considering avenues of resistance generated by the environmental movement – bottom-up rather than top-down initiatives. This might include the types of initiative highlighted by participants in this research, such as the inclusive conservation group or the project that facilitated disabled

people to experience the outdoors. Similarly, facilitating DPOs to work with environmental organisations – or to challenge existing discriminatory practices – might generate the potential for joint action. DPAC (2013) seem to have begun making these connections with regard to climate change and fuel poverty campaigns. Further investigating these kinds of links could be an avenue for future research. A second option outside of policy, meanwhile, is to consider academic work which might point towards potential solutions.

9.4 Environmental citizenship and environmental justice

Research Question Four asked to what extent theories of environmental justice and citizenship are able to accommodate disabled people's experiences regarding sustainable lifestyles, and where and what the gaps are in knowledge or explanation. Chapter Three began to investigate this question by providing an outline of the key issues and highlighting areas where disability (as well as other factors, in the case of environmental citizenship) was not yet being adequately addressed. Chapter Seven additionally began to demonstrate how environmental citizenship might be critiqued from a practice perspective. The empirical research findings – in Chapter Eight – also explored how participants' accounts reflected or contested theories of environmental citizenship and environmental justice.

In Chapters Five and Six, various barriers to pro-environmental behaviours were discussed. Many of these could be interpreted as matters of environmental injustice. Various distributive injustices were demonstrated, such as lack of access to green spaces, or additional costs to participating in pro-environmental behaviours. Although no participants described taking part in formal decision-making processes, barriers to accessing environmental group meetings could be potential examples of procedural injustices. Misrecognition, finally, was highlighted in Chapter Six with regard to ableist messaging in environmental contexts. Environmental justice has relevance for many of the experiences participants described, as well as more broadly for disabled people (as noted in Chapter Three).

It is interesting then, in the light of various findings highlighting differences of experience and opinion between participants, that most participants held broadly similar views in relation to the acceptance of individual responsibilities and the general rejection of environmental rights. This meant that many participants in the research displayed features of mainstream environmental citizenship descriptions, often both in terms of their actions and stated beliefs. How participants discussed responsibility also countered expectations. Given the findings from previous research (with people from BME groups – Clarke and Agyeman, 2011) that people excluded from responsibility often therefore reject it, it was speculated that this might also be the case for disabled people. Intriguingly, participants in this research, however, were more likely to claim responsibility and consider it part of their duty to be environmental. This matched findings from the pilot study also. Environmental justice – which emphasises rights – seems in theory (and from other previous research) to be a better fit in terms of explaining disabled people’s exclusion from sustainable lifestyles, however. That this did not seem to be meaningful for disabled participants in this research or the pilot study therefore requires further consideration.

9.4.1 The model environmental citizen of theory and policy

As the theoretical literature in Chapter Three indicated, defining the environmental citizen is not straightforward. The mainstream theoretical environmental citizen from political studies (Bell, 2013; Dobson, 2010) is primarily based on values (which are assumed to lead to actions). This can lead to difficulties, for example potentially mislabelling those who hold environmental values (but still have high environmental impacts). Similarly, those who might engage in pro-environmental behaviours but not explicitly subscribe to environmental citizenship values may be mislabelled. There is also the environmental citizen from the pro-environmental behaviours literature, who is loosely defined as anyone that takes pro-environmental action (Barr and Gilg, 2006). This latter model fits most readily with the environmental citizen identified in UK policy documents (in Chapter Two section 2.5.1). This citizen is also positioned as a rational actor who responds to information, advice and incentives. The similarity between these latter two ideas may be due to

DEFRA's primary focus on pro-environmental behaviour research and knowledge to explain and influence citizen action (DEFRA, 2011c).

Previous research such as that by Horton (2006a) identified lived environmental citizenship displayed by (some) members of the environmental movement. The environmental citizenship of these 'green political activists' (Horton, 2006a, p.127) was broadly consistent with Dobson's (2003) ecological citizenship. They demonstrated their commitment to equitable sharing of the earth's ecological footprint by attempting to limit the impacts of their lifestyles to a level consistent with their 'fair share'. This focus on individual action may be a response to the more general lack of action noted in sustainability-focused policies more generally (see Chapter Two section 2.5.1). The kinds of activities described in Horton's research also match those of many of the environmentalists mentioned by participants in Chapter Six, such as strict and comprehensive recycling, riding bikes and monitoring their consumption to avoid or limit 'unethical' products. As noted in Chapters Three and Seven, however, environmental values and consumption behaviours can also be combined with unsustainable activities, like the participants in Wolf and colleagues' (2009) research. Therefore individuals that may look like environmental citizens in terms of their values may not be having the reduced environmental impact envisioned by political theorists.

These descriptions of environmental citizens have various ability expectations (Wolbring, 2008) embedded within them. The environmental citizen from policy listed in Chapter Two (section 2.5.1) contained ability expectations such as having access to green space and community facilities, or being financially and intellectually able to make particular choices around consumption. Ability expectations from theory are more implicit due to the disembodied nature of the environmental citizen. Assumptions that actions follow values (see Chapter Three section 3.2.3), however, indicate that similar ability expectations to those from policy might be expected to emerge. For example, the physical ability to carry out pro-environmental behaviours as well as intellectual ability to comprehend and accept the rationale for environmental citizenship are both assumed.

In the context of lived environmental citizenship, individual independence and competition seem to be implied and valued abilities of environmental citizens.

Examples of this include growing one's own food (e.g. Horton, 2003) and competition in terms of saving energy (Hards, 2013). The ability to cycle (and/or to travel without the use of a private car) stands out particularly strongly as a valued ability (Horton, 2006a, 2006b) and an almost moral discourse has emerged around cycling. In the UK context, the bicycle has been specifically positioned in opposition to the private car and rendered incompatible with driving. From this perspective car ownership can taint an otherwise sustainable lifestyle, leading to 'the performance of guilt...' (Horton, 2006b, p.52).

These ability expectations – with their implied embodiments – reflect and reinforce the disability studies critique in Chapter Three (section 3.2.5). Mainstream environmental citizenship theories appear to neglect embodiment while at the same time containing assumptions about the types of embodiment that environmental citizens will have. Ability expectations are also often universalist, assuming that everyone can take part. Disabled people were largely missing from theoretical discussions around environmental citizenship, so it is not possible to comment on the portrayal of disability except its absence. It may, however, be suggested that this invisibility stems from the 'continuing ambiguity about the appropriateness of recognizing the impaired body as a candidate for full political citizenship' (Charles and Thomas, 2007, p.210). Because the relevance of embodiment is ignored, current imaginings of citizens tend to implicitly centre on an 'able bodied' and 'able minded' norm which privileges the majority. Against this norm, disabled people are judged as less capable – if they are recognised at all. This extends in particular to mainstream environmental citizenship theorising, where disabled people and issues of disability have been absent from theory and virtually absent from empirical research.

With regard to sustainability-focused policy, meanwhile, it is interesting that where disabled people were visible, portrayals tended to be of 'vulnerability' and an implicit lack of choice. For example, mentions included people on benefits living in rented accommodation that might be poorly insulated, or the emphasis on concessionary bus travel for disabled people. These examples also seem to ignore or miss different circumstances among different disabled people, as well as broader issues of inaccessibility with regard to public transport. By contrast, disability-specific policies tended to focus on the active citizenship of disabled

people in terms of preparing for and seeking paid employment. This 'active citizen' seems to be, in effect, the 'good' citizen of neoliberalism – minimising her reliance on the state through individualism and independence (Imrie, 2014; Fisher, 2007; Poole, 2000).

It is arguable – as began to be discussed in Chapter Two – that this citizen model also underlies the environmental citizen of policy and of activism. The ability expectations highlighted above of independence and competition support this, and there are also crossovers with the environmental citizen and the 'healthy citizen'. For example, the Department of Health's (2011) obesity strategy links healthy eating and lifestyle with sustainability policies such as active transport and food growing. Both the neoliberal citizen and the theoretical and lived environmental citizen (as identified by Horton, 2006a, among others) promote values of individualising and maximising productivity, efficiency and self-sufficiency, and therefore minimising costs (either to the state or to the environment). For the lived environmental citizen, this occurs through activities such as growing one's own food and minimising reliance on fossil fuels (such as by cycling rather than driving, retrofitting a home to be carbon-neutral or even living 'off-grid').

Health and fitness seem to intersect with environmental protection and implicitly reinforce images around the 'survival of the fittest' and 'rugged' individualism. This kind of masculinity is also heavily embedded in current UK cycling practices (Shove et al., 2012; Horton, 2006a). MacGregor's (2006) concern around the potential co-optation of environmental citizenship by a neoliberal agenda (discussed in Chapter Three section 3.2.4) is therefore relevant. She suggests that the focus on individual responsibility is not a fundamental problem as long as broader structural issues are not forgotten. It is potentially concerning, then, that a neoliberal citizenship-style can be identified from the literature *as well as* participants' experiences of those within the UK environmental movement. Although this is not a universal situation given the heterogeneity of the movement (see Schlembach, 2011), it is a significant problem if the potential organising site of resistance to governmental agendas has also been largely co-opted by those agendas.

9.4.2 Contribution and responsibility

All the citizenship styles discussed so far emphasise the element of contribution or duty of the individual. This reflects the critique begun in Chapter Three that disabled people should be recognised as potential contributors because of the status currently attached to contribution. This would, however, require recognition of differing embodiments. Returning to participant accounts, then, it is relevant to point out that claims to environmental citizenship within these definitions are based on contribution. Participants expressed a sense of individual responsibility for environmental issues and gave implicit and explicit rejections of ideas of environmental rights, except (by some) for those most severely disabled.

As noted in Chapter Eight, participants who actively experienced tensions regarding their environmental impact versus their accessibility needs reported similar experiences to those described by the blogger discussed in Chapter One who coined the term ecodisablism. To briefly recap, ecodisablism seems to be an example of Campbell's (2008b) 'internalised ableism'. This occurs where societal expectations based around 'normal' abilities (in this case with regard to pro-environmental activity) are taken on board by a disabled person leading to a sense of shame and potentially a desire to perform in relation to these ableist expectations. Despite only a few participants actively identifying these kinds of feelings, it is possible that they may also be implied in the focus on individual responsibility or contribution. Participants' acceptance of personal responsibilities may additionally relate to an internalisation of communitarian ideas about obligations linked to rights (Dwyer, 2000), a message strongly featuring in New Labour and now Coalition government rhetoric. If messages about environmental responsibility have been internalised, this also suggests the strength of the message that is promoted by both government and the environmental movement.

Alternatively, some participants described the personal value they drew from being able to contribute in terms of their environmental impact where they were not able to be economically active (see Chapter Eight section 8.3). This could be another reason for focusing on responsibility, because of the potential for a positive association with contribution. Whatever the reason for holding this view, however, it remains the case that individual contribution currently carries status

(MacGregor, 2006) and connotations of agency. These should be acknowledged as belonging to disabled people. As long as there is status to be gained in being identified as an environmental citizen, this should be available to disabled people in the same way as to non-disabled people. This will avoid the danger of further removing agency from disabled people (Morris, 2005).

In a similar vein, theorising and planning for sustainability which includes the concept of environmental citizens (even implicitly) should also include considerations of disability equality, because disabled people can be active environmental citizens (as seen in Chapter Eight). This is particularly important because current representations of environmental citizens do not include, and often actively exclude, many disabled people. Similarly, as shown in Chapter Two, the environmental citizen of current policy is also implicitly non-disabled. This furthers one-dimensional understandings of disabled people as 'vulnerable' and dependent. It also runs the risk, however, of 'activation' style environmental policies, the dangers of which were described above.

A reimagining of the environmental citizen in policy and environmental discourses is thus needed. It could reflect the contributions of current disabled environmental citizens and facilitate the emergence of more, without leading to further disabling consequences. Two options present themselves: integrating disabled people into existing environmental citizenships, or a reimagining of a more fundamentally inclusive form of citizenship. While the latter is intellectually interesting and will be discussed further on, from a pragmatic perspective the former idea may be more useful for immediate action. This could involve raising awareness of disabled people's potential contributions and current barriers to sustainable lifestyles, and facilitating people to take the environmental responsibility they may feel they owe (as participants in this research reported).

There would be a need to focus on structural issues rather than individuals to avoid more activation-style policies that paralleled those of current employment policy. A good example of an alternative idea is the suggestion from nef (2010) that a significantly shorter working week is necessary for environmental, social and economic sustainability (mentioned in Chapter Eight section 8.3). This could improve the situation of those who are not able to work full-time currently, although this speculation is based on shorter hours being implemented in an equitable way (Coote and Franklin, 2013). If everyone worked fewer hours there

would be the potential for more equal incomes between the employed and unemployed. Additionally, those who already work part-time might be relatively more equal in terms of remuneration. It has also been demonstrated that environmental impact is influenced by household income (Kennedy et al., 2014). If reducing working hours limited the wages of the highest earners, this might also reduce the negative impact of those with the largest carbon footprints. Similarly, a new norm of part-time working would potentially free up more time for pro-environmental behaviours. It might contribute to the wider take-up of pro-environmental behaviours across the population (Barry, 2006; MacGregor, 2006). While this could be a step in the right direction, however, it does not address the issue of differential contributions. Contribution is also an issue for those most severely impaired (as described in Chapter Eight).

9.4.3 Contribution and rights

As discussed above, ability expectations were present in policy and theory. They were also identifiable in participant accounts. Some pointed out that even the smallest contribution can make a difference if a large number of people are all making it. Actions like turning off lights, limiting journeys in cars, recycling, buying local, keeping the street environment clean, buying an efficient car, and generally being aware of one's impact on others were all mentioned. A few participants also pointed out that different people had different abilities, but contributing to the extent of their ability was important. As noted in previous chapters, this was not the case for all participants, however. Some felt that their contributions would not make a difference and some could only identify a few ways in which they might contribute.

Similarly, participants tended to focus on responsibilities rather than rights. If only duties and not rights are highlighted, however, there is a danger that disabled people might experience environmental injustice. The environmental injustices faced by disabled people more generally were discussed in Chapter Three. These included being at greater risk of adverse effects after environmental damage, having less access to environmental 'goods' (such as green spaces), being excluded from decision-making processes, or misrecognition (evidenced in the lack of discussion around disability issues in sustainability-focused policy documents). Environmental injustices were also

present in participants' accounts, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The environmental injustice at play when responsibilities are emphasised over rights is also related to a lack of recognition of different needs. For example, some individuals have higher energy needs than others (Walker and Day, 2012). This is the difference between equality and equity – everyone receiving the same allocation or everyone receiving the allocation relevant to their particular needs.

This leads back to the debate that began in Chapter Eight about questions of capacity and the position of those who are most severely disabled. This is an important issue because these are the people who are most often targets of those with extreme views about rights to life, as discussed in Chapter Three section 3.3.2. For example, Singer's (1993) utilitarianism argues the case for killing severely disabled infants, and utilitarianism is also linked to overpopulation debates (Linkola, 2011). This section therefore uses an environmental justice 'lens' to consider the issue of rights in the context of disability equality and sustainability.

Disabled people who cannot take up responsibility in a system that demands it are at risk of being positioned outside of it – as exceptions to the rule or exempted from responsibility (Fenney and Snell, 2011). None of the participants in this research suggested that disabled people should be exempted, with the exception of those most severely disabled. Additionally, one participant suggested that while access was unequal she could not have the same responsibility, but argued that access needed to be created so that disabled people could take up their responsibilities. These perspectives also fit with Morris' concern that disabled people need to be 'treated as belonging and contributing to the communities in which they live' (Morris, 2011, p.1) as a matter of justice. The discourse of responsibility has its limits, however.

As noted in Chapter Eight, a focus on integrating disabled people into current society misses the transformative potential of also considering what kind of society would be most inclusive. Similarly, Abberley's (2002) warning is relevant here: increased inclusion for those who can contribute risks further exclusion for those who cannot. This means rights need to also be considered. As noted in Chapter Eight, citizenship based on contribution is necessarily exclusive of those who cannot contribute (Beckett 2006b). If citizenship is conceived as a primarily a status rather than a practice, however, then there is potential for

grounding it in a common experience of humanity, rather than based on a particular performance (Gabrielson and Parady, 2010; Beckett, 2006b).

As described in Chapter Three (section 3.2.4) Gabrielson and Parady (2010) put forward the concept of 'corporeal citizenship' – highlighting the importance of the body – as opposed to the disembodied nature of environmental citizenship. Horton, for example, suggests that 'environmentalism is an embodied politics' (Horton, 2006a, p.130) but does not consider embodiments outside of the norm; it is therefore an embodiment exclusive of disabled people. The strength of corporeal citizenship as a concept is that unlike more mainstream accounts of environmental citizenship, which prioritise understandings and virtues, it considers citizenship to be fundamentally linked to the body. It therefore encompasses the full spectrum of human interactions with nature.

In a similar way, Alaimo (2010) highlights the inextricable links between human bodies and nature – what she calls 'trans-corporeality'. This is a critique of ideas related to weak sustainability, associated with a neoliberal context, which she suggests, causes humans to conceptualise our bodies in more bounded, individualistic terms. Weak sustainability also overemphasises the capacity of individuals to transcend nature, arising from inherent optimism and faith in humanity's ingenuity and creative ability to overcome environmental hazards and issues of resource scarcity (Alaimo, 2010).

Taylor (2013), meanwhile, problematises the strong sustainability approach by subverting the 'marginal cases' argument for animal rights from a disability studies perspective. Scholars such as Singer, writing from an animal rights perspective, suggest that some animals may be positioned as of more value than humans based on relative cognitive abilities (Singer, 2010). Singer's argument, however, follows a logic that does not problematise the 'tragedy' perspective of disability. Taylor (2013), a vegan disability activist, suggests that discrimination against both disabled people and nonhuman animals is rooted in ableism. Her argument presents a version of 'deep green' ecocentrism that is at the same time inclusive of disabled people.

As noted in Chapter One, neither weak nor strong sustainability approaches tend to address disability issues, and both are problematic if considering the perspective of severely disabled people. Under weak sustainability there is a

lack of status due to not being able to contribute economically, while under strong sustainability the focus on self-sufficiency and independence effectively erases severely disabled people from consideration. An approach founded on rights, however, such as Taylor's argument, provides the potential to include all disabled people alongside a concern for nature. Alternatively, from a more anthropocentric perspective, just sustainability provides the potential to include all disabled people by virtue of a shared humanity – 'a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner' (Agyeman et al., 2003, p.5).

Corporeal citizenship similarly finds itself on the inherent vulnerability of the human condition and therefore the centrality of rights. This again links into Beckett's (2006b) conception of vulnerability as a basis for solidarity, rather than the more negative idea of lack of agency and dependency which is currently popular in policy (as described in Chapter One section 1.1.1). The corporeal citizenship approach is based on status – that of our embodied experience as human beings interconnected with our surroundings. This also broadly fits with Beckett's inclusive model of citizenship which focuses on the 'achievement of human rights for all citizens... on the basis of a universal acceptance of vulnerability' (2006b, p.195).

Following Wolbring (2012), it could be argued that the ability expectations present in these accounts – such as solidarity and community – are more inclusive of disabled bodies. They highlight the inherent vulnerability of the human condition (Turner, 2006; Beckett, 2005, 2006b) and its interdependence with nature (Leipoldt, 2006). This suggests a universal human experience of vulnerability as a useful foundation for incorporating ideas about environmental justice (Gabrielson and Parady, 2010). From the perspective of a fully embodied environmental citizenship, understandings of sustainability would need to be fundamentally reworked to include consideration of diversity and interdependence of human and non-human nature.

This is a transformative perspective that would go further than merely 'recycling' neoliberal framings of individualism, competition and survival of the fittest. Interconnectedness and interdependence are themes arising from ecofeminism (e.g. Alaimo, 2010) but also from disability studies (e.g. Leipoldt, 2006). The issue of interdependence arose in the empirical research because some

participants were facilitated by others – such as family or PAs – to participate in pro-environmental behaviours. This image of interdependence, characteristic of human lives but rendered particularly visible in many disabled people's lives, can also act as a template for the relationship humans should have with nature (Leipoldt, 2006).

Although conceptually interesting, however, it must be remembered that these arguments contrast with participants' accounts in relation to their own responsibilities and rights. Given the importance afforded to participants' perspectives and lived experiences by this research, the remaining discussion will return to theorising that fits more clearly with the empirical evidence. As already described, participants' accounts of their own environmental citizenship place it within a contractual social citizenship-style narrative (see Chapter Eight section 8.1). Similarly their accounts of rights echo classic New Labour rhetoric and communitarian ideas. Therefore although they may be 'read' as classic environmental citizens in terms of other aspects of expressed values, it might also be suggested that a mainstream version of environmental citizenship does not add much to the explanation. Considered more broadly, in that previous research has identified environmental citizens as still having large environmental impacts, it even seems fair to question whether environmental citizenship is actually a useful concept in terms of promoting sustainability.

9.5 Environmental citizenship or sustainable lifestyles?

As highlighted in Chapters Three and Seven, it is possible to perform environmental citizenship without actually having a positive environmental impact. Given that those who do perform it can gain status from this, however, they are also able to influence how environmental citizenship is reproduced. This means those who do not 'look like' environmental citizens are potentially overlooked, regardless of whether those individuals have a lower environmental impact. Returning to a social practice approach, this can be explained further.

For example, as highlighted by Evans (2011a, 2011b), environmental citizenship may be associated with particular types of consumption and frugality. These types of consumption, however – although they may 'look like'

environmental citizenship – may also be found in combination with practices that are unsustainable. This may be practices of individuals with high environmental concern but also high environmental impacts (Barr et al., 2011b; Wolf et al., 2009) or even simply the reproduction of inequality by high-income households consuming low-impact but high-cost goods (such as some of the participants in Evans' (2011a) research).

Therefore, overall, this environmental citizenship actually may have little effect on environmental impact or improving sustainability. Furthermore, it simultaneously excludes those who fall outside of these specific consumption/frugality patterns. Conversely, the lifestyles of many on low incomes (including some disabled people) do reduce environmental impacts, for example through energy and water use that involve conservation and limited consumption. This may be unrelated to classic environmental citizenship values, however; the 'accidental environmentalists' (Hobson, 2013) described in Chapter Three. When enacted in this context, the disabling effects of low incomes and the stigmatised nature of these activities may be produced and reproduced (Hards, 2013).

Those most likely to demonstrate the normative values and beliefs of environmental citizens are therefore not necessarily those with the smallest ecological footprints. The problem is firstly, how to make sure the kinds of practices of those with low environmental impacts are sustainable both environmentally, economically, *and* socially. Secondly, it is necessary to alter the practices of those traditionally recognised as 'environmental citizens' to those that are truly sustainable – both socially and environmentally. Both of these aims require a turn away from the individual to the social.

There is the need to alter practices which reduce environmental impacts to improve accessibility, but also to de-normalise practices which promote individualism and self-sufficiency at the expense of cooperation and interdependence. Similarly, there is a need to alter what is perceived as 'normal' in terms of more elite lifestyles. This includes those who may come under the traditional definition of environmental citizenship in terms of environmental values, but with unsustainable practices (such as frequent air travel). There is also a need to alter what is perceived as 'normal' in terms of sustainability (e.g. problematising the structures which promote continuing consumption, ever-

increasing productivity and economic growth). Both of these latter changes could also reduce inequalities and thus further promote disability equality and environmental sustainability. Horton (2003), meanwhile, argues that the production of 'sustainable performances' might be more important than the production of 'sustainable citizens'. This challenges Dobson and Bell's (2006) suggestion that actions need to be underpinned by values to create real change.

This discussion suggests that what is more important than good intentions is action. This is not individual action, however, so much as creating contexts where individual motivations are less important. It therefore again highlights the potential utility of a social practice approach, as described in Chapter Seven. Horton (2006a), in his research on environmental citizens (described in Chapter Three section 3.2.3), suggests that external factors lead to the production – or otherwise – of environmental citizenship. Specific factors in terms of green networks, spaces, materialities and times were implicated in the production and reproduction of the environmental citizens he studied. Horton therefore argues that this citizenship could only be broadened via a promotion of green culture through what he describes as 'green architecture' (Horton, 2006a, p.145). This also fits with Shove's suggestion that, in a similar way that 'obesogenic environments' are conceptualised, an 'envirogenic' environment could be created – 'ones that favour the reproduction of variously sustainable ways of life' (Shove, 2010, p.1282). To continue Horton's metaphor in this respect, his concept of green architecture needs also to be accessible to disabled people and therefore incorporate a concern for disability equality.

As the findings of this thesis indicated, different types of accessibility are relevant for disability equality. Physical accessibility, for example, is relevant in terms of reaching and entering 'green spaces'. It was noted in Chapter Three that the main 'green' meeting places described by Horton might well have no step-free access. 'Green spaces' may have funding implications and it is often the case that inaccessible locations are cheaper to make use of (such as upstairs function rooms in pubs). As Willitts – a disabled activist and blogger – argues, however, it should not be acceptable for a space to 'be considered to be ethical if it does not allow disabled customers to use it' (Willitts, 2014, no pagination). As noted in Chapter Five, physical access to spaces (both natural

and built) is fundamental for many aspects of participation. Horton (2006a) discusses how the 'green spaces' he describes are facilitative of various aspects of his participants' green identities. They therefore underpin other pro-environmental practices. Similarly, 'green materialities' – physical objects such as bikes and organic food – facilitate sustainable lifestyles. These have implications in terms of physical and financial barriers. Again, participants in the current research described various types of barriers regarding objects such as recycling bins, bikes, and accessible technologies, as well as the need for car use. Interestingly, however, Horton notes that computers are facilitative objects in terms of campaigning and letter writing. This was also something mentioned by some participants as an activity they did engage with. It is therefore a potentially accessible way to get involved. It could still present access issues for participants with visual impairments, however, and may also depend on financial circumstances.

Organisational accessibility, meanwhile, is relevant regarding 'green times'. As noted in Chapter Seven (section 7.4), certain times and events are constitutive of green lifestyles so having 'spare' time in which to undertake pro-environmental activities becomes relevant. Another aspect of green times not specifically mentioned by Horton but addressed by others such as MacGregor (2006) is the time associated with different types of labour, such as the extra time involved in domestic environmental tasks like recycling. MacGregor also highlights how many timed aspects of environmental citizenship – such as childcare versus attending community meetings – are often gendered aspects.

The concept of 'crip time' was discussed in Chapter Seven as one that takes into account the need for flexibility in timings and enables a different approach to time rather than expecting disabled people to fit into non-disabled timings (Price, 2009). Participants in this research highlighted various examples of the need for flexibility or extra time for different activities. This can impact on either the ability to carry them out or their environmental impact, as can broader issues such as time outside of work. Time is therefore another aspect to consider regarding how accessible a particular activity might be. The discussion earlier in this chapter about reducing working hours is one aspect of a potential solution in this case. As noted in Chapter Two, however, the amount of time a person has available is also at least in part determined by other roles and

statuses also (MacGregor, 2006). Therefore as well as a universalist increase in free time, 'crip time' would also need to be taken into account.

Finally, 'green networks' are dependent on physical and organisational accessibility but also relate to social interactions and barriers. Horton (2006a) describes green networks as the groups and individuals that provide the information and informal education new and continuing environmental citizens need to develop their pro-environmental practices. This can involve formal meetings or 'chance encounters' in green spaces such as ethical food shops or cafes. Again the importance of physical accessibility of these spaces is highlighted, but the idea of green networks also has implications for the experiences participants reported with the environmental movement (in Chapter Six section 6.2.2). If implicit or explicit disablism and ableism are encountered, it is less likely that disabled people will be successfully recruited into particular environmental groups. Similarly, the fear of judgemental environmentalism reported by some participants is relevant here. Environmental groups may need to actively present themselves as welcoming, as well as having internal accessibility considerations, to counter previous negative experiences or perceptions.

Considering accessibility relating to Horton's 'green architecture' thus provides a starting point for thinking about how to facilitate disability equality in relation to a lower impact way of life. It suggests an alternative to environmental citizenship in terms of focusing not on individuals but on the contexts in which people go about their lives. It also offers the potential to challenge the neoliberal paradigm because it is not dependent on individualism, but can also be related to Middlemiss' (2010) concept of 'situated responsibility' where individuals are facilitated to take responsibility. There are still, however, potentially difficult questions left unanswered about the status of people who are unable to contribute in economic or environmental terms. Additionally, there is potential for this kind of approach to reduce choice and agency. As Horton himself suggests 'green contexts...dilute the relevance of individual agency' (Horton, 2006a, p.146). This raises questions of whether or not a balance could be struck between enabling and enforcing sustainable lifestyles. Given that Horton suggests green architecture is already being created in a small way by groups within the environmental movement, the potential for democratic 'bottom-up'

initiatives (which could also be the way forward in relation to the problems raised in the earlier section on policy contributions) needs to be explored. Most importantly in the context of this research, however, those initiatives need to be accessible to and inclusive of disabled people.

9.6 Concluding comments

As noted at the start of this chapter, this thesis has taken an intentionally broad approach to the consideration of disability equality and sustainability in the UK context. The different understandings of concepts such as disability equality and sustainability have implications for every aspect – from theory to policy to practice – and different synergies and tensions may arise in different contexts. Neither the neoliberal economic approach to disability equality and sustainability in UK policy, nor the environmental approach from many activists and sustainability academics, appears to consider fully the vital social factors that could facilitate a multidimensional disability equality. Therefore potential synergies are not operationalised and tensions remain. Similarly, disability organisations – and to a large extent disability studies as a discipline – seem to have often overlooked environmental concerns in relation to sustainability. Therefore, potential work to disrupt tensions in theory, policy and practice is not developed. In this overall context disabled people, such as the participants in this research, appear to be facing a struggle to navigate sustainable lifestyles, with lived experiences characterised more by tensions than synergy. They described various barriers and ‘balancing acts’ between their concerns of accessibility and sustainability.

It is also possible, however, to see that theoretical concepts such as environmental justice and just sustainability have the potential to overcome many of the tensions apparent in theoretical debates (as seen Chapters One and Three). Environmental justice also usefully explained many experiences participants recounted. Its arguments in terms of rights, however, contrasted with participants’ accounts of the importance of responsibility. The concept of ‘green architecture’, which Horton (2006a) developed as a result of environmental citizenship theory and research, could potentially be expanded to incorporate concern for disability equality. It can also integrate a concern for

responsibility, and could also be underpinned by concepts of justice, if green architecture is made accessible to all. Importantly, it lays the groundwork to imagine how a more synergistic discourse around disability equality and sustainability might lead to greater accessibility in disabled people's lived experiences, and a more inclusive environmentalism.

Appendix A – DEFRA’s Sustainable Lifestyles Framework

(DEFRA, 2011d)

Headline Behaviours	Key Behaviours	Sub-Behaviours	Centre of Expertise on Influencing Behaviour, Defra
Eco-improving your home (retrofitting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insulating your home Upgrading heating & hot water systems Fitting & using water saving devices Generating own energy by installing renewables Managing temperature Washing & drying laundry using minimum energy & water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing loft insulation Upgrading boiler Upgrading to low flush toilet Wind Fitting & using temperature controls Line drying laundry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topping up loft insulation Installing cavity wall insulation Fitting water efficient shower head Solar / water Micro- CHP Ground and air source heat pumps
Using energy & water wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining & repairing (instead of replacing) Giving new life to unwanted items eg furniture Making the most of kerbside and local recycling services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Switching to green energy tariff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repairing furniture Repairing clothes Repairing electrical goods Repairing furniture
Extending the life of things (to minimise waste)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing foods grown in season (in country of origin) Increasing proportion of vegetables, fruit, and grains in diet (eating a balanced diet) Cooking sustainable & healthier food Wasting less food Growing your own food Using labelling to choose most energy & water efficient products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep electrical goods for longer Appliances & electrical goods Disposing safely of batteries, paint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using furniture reuse organisations, or services such as Freecycle, ebay etc Recycling textiles & clothes Registering with Mail Preference Service
Cooking and managing a sustainable & healthier diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing fairly traded, eco-labelled and independently certified food, clothing etc Borrowing, hiring or sourcing second-hand or recycled Buying ethically when travelling Making the most of cycling, walking, public transport and car sharing for short journeys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home composting food waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning meals ahead Storing for quality & safety
Choosing eco-products & services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When buying or replacing a vehicle, take advantage of lower-emission models available Making the most of alternatives to travel eg video conferencing Making the most of lower-carbon alternatives to flying - eg trains Driving more efficiently Setting up car share and using car clubs Installing community micro-gen Sharing knowledge, skills etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable fish such as MSC fish Borrowing or hiring electrical goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low impact clothes Recycled products Choosing without excessive packaging Choosing 2nd hand furniture Choosing 2nd hand clothing Using local hire / share & swap schemes for tools etc.
Travelling sustainably		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combining trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using eco-driving techniques Maintaining tyre pressure
Setting up & using resources in your community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swapping skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with community to grow food Comparing energy use within community
Using & future-proofing outdoor spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gardening for biodiversity & environment Enjoying the outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using your local green spaces Volunteering for local conservation project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using rainwater and a water butt Home composting garden waste Using peat free compost Joining an environmental / conservation group
Being part of improving the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering (with a local or national group) Getting involved in local decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering for local conservation project Taking part in local planning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joining an environmental / conservation group

Appendix B – Interview Prompts

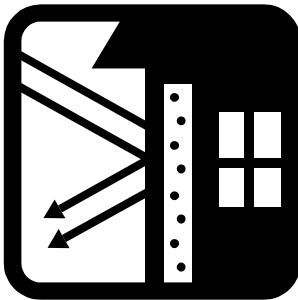
Water



Energy



Home
Improvements



Travel



Repair, re-use
and recycling



Food



Buying



Green Spaces



Community



Other



Voluntary work or
campaigning



Appendix C – Demographic monitoring questionnaire

Demographic Monitoring Questions

I am asking these questions so that I can make sure I get a wide range of participants. There are seven questions. If you would prefer not to answer a question just leave it blank. Any information you choose to provide will be kept strictly confidential.

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your age group?

<i>18 – 24</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>25 – 34</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>35 – 49</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>50 – 64</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>66 and over</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which of these best describes your impairment or health condition? (Tick as many as apply)

<i>Mobility impairment</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Sensory impairment</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Learning difficulty or disability</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Chronic health condition</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other (please state)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How would you describe your ethnic group?

5. Which area of Leeds do you live in?

6. How many people live in your household?

7. Which of these best describes what you do at the moment?

Looking after home or family	<input type="checkbox"/>
In paid work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking for paid work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not currently working	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Studying	<input type="checkbox"/>
None of these	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you very much.

Appendix D – Research Flyer



Tell me what you think!



My name is Deborah Fenney and I am a PhD student at the University of Leeds.

I'm doing research and want to find out about disabled people's opinions and experiences.

At the moment, many people are interested in trying to be more environmentally friendly. Whether or not we agree with them, government and local councils are trying to encourage us to change our behaviour to help protect the environment. However, being environmentally friendly might be more difficult for some people than others. I'm interested in what you think about this.

If you:

- ✓ live in the Leeds area
- ✓ are disabled, or have a long-term physical or mental health condition, or a learning difficulty or disability

and

- ✓ are over 18

Then I would like to speak to you! I would like to talk to you about whether or not environmental issues affect your everyday life. I'd also like to find out what you think about these kinds of issues.

If you would like to know more or are interested in taking part please contact me for more information:

Email: d.fenney@leeds.ac.uk Phone: 07970 315 105

www.facebook.com/ResearchAboutTheEnvironment

School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Appendix E – Information Sheet

Information Sheet: Disabled People and Pro-Environmental Behaviour: Accessibility and Sustainability

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether you would be willing to do this, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the project's purpose?

I am aiming to find out about the experiences that disabled people have had regarding environmental issues and what they think about these issues. I am doing this project for a PhD in Sociology at the University of Leeds. I chose it because I would like to find out if disabled people are being left out when considering ways to protect the environment and reduce climate change. Even though the environment is not a top priority for many people, the government is making changes and if disabled people's needs are not considered they may be left out. I hope that this study will help highlight areas of existing good practice as well as where more work is needed.

Why have I been chosen?

I am trying to gather a range of different experiences that disabled people have had regarding environmental issues. This means it is important for me to talk to people who think the environment is important, as well as people who think it is not very important.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form and you can still withdraw at any time until August 2013. You do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part? What kind of information will I be asked for and why is it relevant?

There are two ways you can take part:

1. Participating in a research interview* that involves simply talking about your experiences,
2. Participating in focus group discussion with other disabled people.

* By 'research interview' I mean a conversation between you and me which focuses on the issues this project is investigating – usually I will have a few topics to cover and some specific questions. This conversation could be face-to-face, or over the telephone, or via email or 'instant messaging' if these are more accessible to you. The topics or prompts will be about different environmental issues and the questions will be about any experiences you have of them, and what you think about them. If for any reason you don't wish to answer a question, you won't have to. You'll be free to talk about anything you think is relevant, even if it's not on my list. All this information will enable me to learn about your experiences and those of other people who take part and to learn more about the issues involved.

Face-to-face interviews and focus groups will be held at a location convenient for you. The time commitment involved should not be more than 30 minutes to an hour. There will be an opportunity a few weeks later to check up on – and change or add to if you wish – my write-up of the conversation. If it is necessary for you to travel to take part, please let me know as I may be able to reimburse travel expenses.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

I will record interviews on a digital voice recorder. I will only use it to enable me to write up what we talked about and no one else will listen to it. I will keep the recordings on a secure university server and delete them at the end of the project.

What are the possible disadvantages and benefits of taking part?

There are no immediate benefits for people who participate in the project, and I am unable to reimburse you for your time. However, it is hoped that this work will be a small contribution to the knowledge of people who have the power to

change things, and findings will be passed on to disabled people's organisations as well as environmental organisations.

Will my taking part be confidential?

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. If you take part in a focus group discussion, the other people in the discussion will know what you have said. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. My supervisors may see the write up of our discussion, but they will not know who has taken part because all names and recognisable information will be removed.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Firstly, they will be submitted as part of my PhD thesis. You and other participants will be given a key note summary – and if you wish, a copy of the complete report. A summary will also be sent to relevant disability and environmental organisations and policy makers. After this, it may be substantially edited and then submitted to an academic journal to be published.

Contact for further information

Deborah Fenney
School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT
Email: d.fenney@leeds.ac.uk
Tel: 07970 315105

Thank you for considering taking part in my project!

Appendix F – Information booklet Easy Read Format (size reduced to fit page)

Information about the project

This project is about disabled people and the environment.

Would you like to take part in this project?

Before you decide it is important that you understand why I am doing this project.

It is important that you understand what taking part might involve for you.



Please read this booklet carefully. You can talk to other people about it if you would like to.



Please ask someone if there is anything you don't understand. Please tell me if I have not explained something properly.

After you have finished, you can decide if you want to take part.

Thank you for thinking about taking part in my project!

What is in this booklet



These are the questions answered in this information booklet. You can look them up using the page numbers on each page.

What is the project about? ----- Page 3

Why do you want me to take part? ----- Page 4

Do I have to take part? ----- Page 4

What will happen to me if I take part? ----- Page 4

What do you want to ask me? ----- Page 5

Will I be recorded? ----- Page 5

Will taking part be good or bad for me? ----- Page 6

Will you tell people what I say? ----- Page 6

What will you do with what you find out? --- Page 6

Contact information ----- Page 7

What is the project about?

I want to find out what disabled people think about being environmentally friendly.

Environmentally friendly means doing things like:



Recycling



Caring for the earth



Thinking about how much energy you use

I am doing this project because I am a **research** student at the University of Leeds. **Research** means finding out about things and why they happen.

I want to find out if disabled people are being left out when it comes to the environment.



I think that disabled people have an equal right to take part in being environmentally friendly if they want to.

I hope this project will show where disabled people need more access. I also hope it will show where disabled people are already being included.

Why do you want me to take part?



I am trying to find out what disabled people think about the environment and being environmentally friendly. The only people who know are disabled people themselves.



I need to speak to disabled people who think the environment is important. I also need to speak to people who think it is not important.

Do I have to take part?



This is up to you. If you would like to take part I will ask you to sign a sheet that checks you understand about taking part. If you change your mind you can stop taking part at any time. You don't have to tell me why if you don't want to.

What will happen to me if I take part?



You can talk to me about what you think and what experiences you have had. This would take between one and two hours.



If you live a long way from me, we might talk by telephone or by webcam. You can choose which you would prefer.

What do you want to ask me?

I will ask you about different ways of being environmentally friendly. I would like to know what you think about them and if you have ever tried to do any of them.



Afterwards I will send you a copy of what we said. If you want to add or change anything you will be able to.

Will I be recorded?

I will bring a digital voice recorder to use to record our meeting. Recording our meeting means I won't be distracted by trying to remember what you said!

Digital Voice Recorder

I will only use the recording to help me to write up what we talked about. No one else will listen to it.



I will keep the recording stored using a password on a computer at the university.

Only I will be able to listen to it because only I have the password for the file. It will be deleted at the end of my project.

Will taking part be good or bad for me?

Taking part will take up some of your time, and I can't pay you for it. I will tell environmental groups what I have found out. This may help them make things easier for disabled people to get involved.

Will you tell people what I say?



Only I will know what you said.

When I write about what was said, I will not use your real name or anything else personal about you.

What will you do with what you find out?

I will do three things with what I find out:



1) I will write a report for the university. They will look at this and give me a grade for my work.



2) I will write an easy read summary of what I find out and send it to you. You can also see the full report if you want to.



3) I will try and let other people who might be interested know what I find out.

Contact information



Deborah
Fenney



07970 315 105



d.fenney@leeds.ac.uk



Deborah Fenney
c/o School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9LU

Thank you for thinking about taking part in my project!

Appendix G – Consent Form

University of Leeds

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Disabled People and Pro-Environmental Behaviour:
Accessibility and Sustainability

Name of Researcher: Deborah Fenney

Please tick the appropriate box to the left of each statement

- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I give permission for the researcher's supervisors to see my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree to take part in this research project. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Email or postal address (to send transcript and research results)

- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Would you be willing to be contacted about taking part in follow-up research that might be undertaken in relation to this project? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Contact details for the researcher are as follows:

Email d.fenney@leeds.ac.uk , call 07970 315 105, or write to: Deborah Fenney, c/o School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Appendix H – Participant Consent Form Easy Read Version

Disabled People and Environmentally Friendly Behaviour

Agreeing to Take Part



Please tick the box to answer these questions about taking part.



If you don't understand something, please ask me or someone close to you to explain.

Yes

No

Do you understand what this project is about?



Have you been able to ask questions about it?



Do you understand that you can stop taking part if you change your mind?



Do you understand that you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to?



Do you understand that no one else will know you took part in this project, unless you choose to tell them, and only Deborah Fenney will know which words were yours?



Do you want to take part in this project?



Can I contact you again after this project if I do more research?



Please write your name: _____

Please write today's date: _____

Please sign: _____

Please write an email address or postal address:

(This is so that I can send you the write-up of our conversation and the research findings)

Thank you!

Researcher's name: Deborah Fenney



07970 315 105



d.fenney@leeds.ac.uk



Deborah Fenney
c/o School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9LU

Appendix I – List of Leeds City Council Documents Reviewed

Type	Document	Year
Regional	Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership Plan	2011
	Draft Leeds Local Implementation Plan (Transport) 2011 – 2014	2011
Over-arching	Vision for Leeds	2011
	City Priority Plans	2011
	Leeds Climate Change Strategy	2012
	Leeds Local Development Framework	2011
	Core Strategy	DRAFT
	Leeds Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	2012
Specific	Leeds City Council EMAS Environmental Statement	2012
	Parks and Greenspace Strategy	2011
	Integrated Waste Strategy 2005 – 2035	2005
	Affordable Warmth Strategy 2007-2016	2007
	Building for Tomorrow Today – Supplementary Planning Document (Guidance)	2011
	Adult Social Care Local Account	2012/13
	Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy	2011
	Adult Social Care Mental Health and Physical Impairment Service Annual Report 2012 and service plan 2013-14	2012
	Autism Strategy	2011
	Dementia Action Plan	2012
	Equality and Diversity Policy	2011
	Learning Disability Community Support Service Plan	2012

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