Restoring or re-storying the Lake District: applying responsive cohesion to a current problem situation.

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of ethics in addressing aspects of ecological restoration in culturally-saturated landscapes. Do we have the ethical tools to respond to the complex questions that restoration poses? We can see valued landscapes, such as the English Lake District, as culturally rich or as ecologically denuded. This paper will juxtapose the demands of retaining rich cultural narratives and the potential for rewilding to allow for greater self-sustaining biological diversity and space for unrestrained nature. Using the ethical theory of responsive cohesion this paper will explore the cultural narrative vs wildness question in the context of the English Lake District.

Introduction to the problem situation

The problem situation that rewilding cultural landscapes can present is one of a tension between conflicting views of a landscape. England's Lake District is a useful case to explore: small enough to provide some focus, but large enough to suggest more broadly applicable principles. The Lake District is a mountainous region of the North West of England that is roughly 912 square miles, most of which falls within a national park. In 2017 it was designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site. There is a local population of 41,000 and the dominant industry is tourism, which is largely driven by the scenery and cultural heritage. The tension discussed in this paper is played out in many places around the world where competing narratives are at stake. For the Lake District this tension is seen most starkly in

the rewilder's conception of upland farmland as 'sheepwrecked', ecologically denuded and thus a potential area for introducing or allowing natural regeneration of greater biodiversity by removing sheep (Monbiot, 2013). To the upland farmers the land is theirs to farm and, though agriculturally difficult land, through hard work it has been made productive and is part of a way of life steeped in meaning. For those visitors to, or appreciators of, traditional landscapes there is a particular aesthetic value to these heritage landscapes and they function as holders of great cultural significance. Debates on these issues proliferate, including scientific studies of the effectiveness or not of rewilding to increase biodiversity, policy studies on the impact of changing subsidy systems and so on. As complex as such aspects are, and as useful as such studies are, they do not always address the question of conflicting values. What happens in such landscapes is an ethical question about what we should do with land. Farmers have the benefit of ownership, or at least personal dwelling and daily practice, as a reason they should dictate how land is used. And they are the humans most immediately impacted by policy changes. However, in most instances upland farms and even grouse moors are actually supported by European/government subsidies to which the public contribute via taxes. Moreover, in many upland farming areas it is tourism that provides a high proportion of the local income that sustains the community. Although there are economic arguments that call into question the economic sustainability of upland sheep farming, there are also questions to be asked about the value of biodiversity in and of itself. In scientific papers biodiversity often operates as an unexamined good (Maier, 2012), but why is it good, what is it about biodiversity that warrants a moral crusade for its growth in these areas (Wood, 1997)? Following expositions of the concept of place narratives in cultural landscapes and the idea of rewilding as a way of increasing self-sustaining biodiversity, I will describe the relatively new ethical theory of responsive cohesion and then use the English Lake District as a case study to see if responsive cohesion is able to offer a way forward. As with any theory there are problems of interpretation and of application when it meets a real world problem situation, as opposed to a thought experiment designed to demonstrate the defensibleness or otherwise of a particular theory. And, as will be seen here, the conclusions are somewhat tentative.

Place narratives

When arguing for strong heritage values vested in particular cultural landscapes a core notion is that there is value in continuing a narrative (O'Neill et. al., 2008). The current activities and landscape forms have the meaning they have because of their embeddedness in a long historical tradition that gives those lives and that landscape meaning (Casey, 2001). It was Ted Relph who wrote the scene setting text *Place and Placelesness* which draws attention to the plight of areas where that interplay breaks down and the relationship becomes one of alienation rather than belonging and an area becomes placeless – it could be anywhere rather than this specific place (Relph, 1976). From a place narrative perspective, retaining a sense of place requires some kind of continuing narrative that makes sense. As with the term landscape 'character' the sense of a landscape as a being who can be nurtured or corrupted is strong. Narrative does have the sense of a future as well as a past; the story or at least something of its trajectory should continue. With cultural landscapes the meanings and place attachments can be thought of as bound up with, and in part created by, social memory and it is this social memory that builds community resilience (Drenthen, 2009; Wilson, 2015). Thus narrative as a concept helps to move conservation thinking away from resisting all change or deep freezing a place, but allows for landscape decisions to be historically informed in order to carry a place into its future in a way that respects its past and progresses its narrative in a meaningful way. The idea is to give the past an explicit voice in decisions about the future. This certainly seems to be the intention when John O'Neill and Alan Holland use the term narrative when addressing decision making in conservation. In a paper entitled 'The Integrity of Nature Over Time: some problems' they say:

> Rather, it is crucial that we pay attention to the *temporal* - the 'diachronic' dimension. Thus, the problem is, or should be construed as, the problem of *how best to continue the narrative*; and the question we should ask is: what would make the most appropriate trajectory from what has gone before? (1996:3)

In the current debates about the future of upland farming in the Lake District such an idea could be useful.

There are issues around the use of place narrative as the only or primary means of establishing sustainability or value, especially moral values (Hourdequin, 2013). For Nordhaus and Shellenberger (2007) emphasising place based forms of environmentalism could amount to a type of placism: an irrational valuing of one place – and how it has been in the past – over other places. For them the significant work of bringing about environmental sustainability requires thinking globally and addressing global concerns like climate change by the best means. If that means wind turbines instead of oil tankers then a person who objects to wind turbines in a place, based on their relationship with the place, are NIMBYs (2007: 103). Their criticisms are largely of the rhetoric of preservation of nature or speaking for nature, as opposed to the role of narrative in cultural landscapes, but the charge of placism could be a concern. However, their NIMBY criticism assumes that the valuing of a place is always comparative: this place is special as opposed to that one which is not (Palmer, 2011: 352). Place narratives as used by O'Neill and Holland are not about comparative virtues between places but comparative trajectories of a specific place. This also deals with Nordhaus and Shellenberger's claim that a place focus imposes "stasis across time" (2007: 103).

An obvious strength of narrative is that we do not have to be drawn to an idealised primitive past. The aim is to make connections with how a place got to its present state. The focus on an informed narrative or story could mean that we are not falling into the illusion of idealizing a past as if it only started changing recently. An informed historical narrative, rather than a Romantic cliché, should tell us about a place through many changes and developments. The decisions about how to continue the story are still to be resolved. It is not the intention that the concept of narrative applied to place will give us a clear answer, but as a conceptual tool it has the virtue of acknowledging what has gone before.

A focus on the historical could be accused of overemphasising the temporal at the expense of the spatial and the connections between places (Palmer, 2011: 355). As will be discussed later, the wider spatial context is important and perhaps place narratives can miss this crucial aspect. Moreover, historical narratives can, in many cases quite rightly, be accused of occluding some voices to create a fictional story that privileges particular groups. To address this issue different narratives have to be taken into account. Not just the tension between the cultural and the natural, but tensions within the cultural narratives have to be

acknowledged, debated, and choices arrived at; preferably through a process of deliberation. There may well be conflicts that can never be resolved in this way, but the implication is that a shared story, arrived at by informed consideration of the various histories - both cultural and natural - will be a good thing and assist wise decision making about places (O'Neill, et. al., 2008: 157). An early example of this kind of debate was generated by the artist Gloria Bornstein's 1996 pieces on the Seattle waterfront 'Shore View Points' and 'Voice Library'. The various waterfront viewpoints were given alternative sign boards - next to the 'mainstream' information boards - that told a Native American version of history and the Voice Library gathered people's reflections, responses and messages (Potteiger & Purinton, 1998: 199). This is an example of narrative opening a flow of conversation about place and meaning. Sometimes such debate will heighten tensions between different interpreters, but the aim is to reach an accommodation that does not stifle some voices in the same way, as the new narrative has revealed, was done in the past.

The current, historically informed, use of narrative does allow for the full natural and human story of a landscape to be considered. It goes some way to explaining why we derive, not just pleasure, but a deep sense of connection to places. Humans live in and are shaped by stories and symbols (Denthen, 2009) as much as they live in places, and the honouring of those stories is an important aspect of recognising a form of quasi obligation (Palmer, 2011: 354) that is created. This quasi obligation could be seen as a covenant that people share with the land and each other.

When place narrative language moves into the arena of values or ethics there can be the danger of a form of circularity. If we know the right thing to do, as derived from the narrative, how did we arrive at the morally justifiable narrative (McShane, 2012)? Whilst narrative can do important descriptive work and assist in revealing values that are held it possibly needs something more foundational to assist in sifting the good narratives from the bad or to justify whether a particular valued narrative is actually one that should be valued (Hourdequin, 2013).

Rewilding

The concept of rewilding, as a development in both conservation science and environmental philosophy, has a number of dimensions and shifting meanings (Lorimer, et al, 2015;

Jørgensen, 2016; Gammon, forthcoming). Beginning with the Wildlands project, started in 1991 to create core wilderness areas in North America involving large predators, the term has come to mean a range of different things, as Jørgensen tracks in her paper 'Rethinking Rewilding'. There are a number of common aspects in current uses such as retaining or reintroducing keystone species to enable trophic cascades. The species chosen are often large herbivores and predators: top predators are seen as necessary for the top-down process of creating ecological cascading effects. Some rewilders use the Pleistocene epoch (2,588 to around 10,000 years ago), or the earlier phases of the Holocene epoch that succeeded it, as the ideal phases of ecological history to determine what should be reintroduced, although using baselines of specific times or species in the context of climate change is becoming controversial (Keulartz, 2016; Drenthen, forthcoming). An overall aim is to increase self-sustaining biodiversity and natural processes in the long term. The management of land for rewilding can be closely monitored: with tree planting, animal releases and landscape morphology adjustments such as decanalising rivers, or the term can be used to designate a withdrawal of human intervention to let nature take over, e.g., removing coastal protection or removing grazing animals (Steinwall, 2015). Rewilding as a term has also broadened to include human psychology (Bekoff, 2014), and this is usefully captured by Andrea Gammon's classification as "reflexive rewilding" (forthcoming).

Sometimes the term is used to reject or critique a wilderness protection/rehabilitation approach or an approach to restoration that aims for a return to or to retain a specific ecological system and mix of species at a specific time (Grey & Curry, 2015). Rewilding in this context does not suggest only species richness, as if that is a good in and of itself (Wood, 1997), but the interlocking relationships that will support a continuation of biodiversity and adaptation into the future. Thus rewilding could fit well with the apparent oxymoron of 'future restoration' (Hourdequin, 2013).

Landscapes previously farmed or used for hunting have become prime areas of interest to rewilders, as have derelict industrial areas. The unplanned resurgence of wildlife in the Chernobyl exclusion zone, following the 1986 nuclear power station accident, demonstrated that, even with high radioactive contamination, all that was necessary to allow mammal communities to thrive, expand and self-regulate and thus assist a general increase in biodiversity, was to exclude humans (Deryabina, et al, 2015).

Rewilding holds a particular attraction in the context of cultural landscapes or smaller areas of land as it doesn't presuppose a continuous wilderness pedigree or even, in some instances, that potential introductions are or were ever native to an area. What is looked for in an introduction is functional equivalence to fill the niche (Griffiths, 2011). Although in the context of cultural landscapes the idea of a reintroduction of a lost species has the advantage of narrative richness. Contrary to the wilderness discourse it allows for some wildness to re-enter densely populated and heavily managed countries and a role for humans. Whereas a key driver for some rewilding projects is to increase connectivity and ensure the large ranges necessary for some mega fauna populations, in other instances the rewilding message can mean little more than just 'loosen control a bit' – we don't need to manage every last acre of land. Its rhetoric extends to human psychology as well, where a mind-set of control or domination is unhealthy and we need to be open to the chance transformations that nature can bring about. The combination of wilderness ideas with human benefit and landscape engagement is brought together in statements such as the mission statement of the NGO Rewilding Europe:

> Rewilding Europe wants to make Europe a wilder place, with much more space for wildlife, wilderness and natural processes. Bringing back the variety of life for us all to enjoy and exploring new ways for people to earn a fair living from the wild.

Here the social aspect is evident and in the UK, particularly, rewilding is promoted as creating environments that people will want to visit, live within and not be excluded from. The 'letting nature take its course' aspect of rewilding could create tensions in cultural landscapes because the aesthetic qualities that will result cannot be planned (Prior & Brady, 2016). The NGO Rewilding Britain has a strong mix of ecological preservation and social renewal. For example its mini manifesto reads:

- Reverse the loss of biodiversity in large core areas of land and sea;
- Reintroduce key missing species, including the lynx and wolf;
- Restore ecosystems to a functional and resilient state;
- Reignite people's passion for the natural world;
- Revitalise local economies in ways that work ecologically;
- Reintegrate nature and society for the benefit of both.

It is the introduction of large predators like the wolf and lynx that prompt the most controversy in rewilding debates and are seen to be incompatible with its cultural and social goals.

Wild boar is seen as a useful species reintroduction to increase biodiversity, particularly to previously grazed land or managed woodland (Monbiot, 2014:95). In the UK the accidental reintroduction of wild boars to the Forest of Dean has brought about positive and negative developments for the local people.   The wild boars have caused damage to gardens, become a road hazard and attacked dogs. Local people can see the attraction of this large wild species freely roaming the forest and visitors do get to experience walking in woods where there are wild boars and potentially seeing them. However, there is also a resistance to the perceived increased danger, a danger that the local and national press sensationalises for dramatic effect (Dutton, et al, 2015).

The introduction of wolves and bears in North America and Europe and their impact on farms has been widely researched as this is the greatest point of contention between conservation/ rewilding and livestock farmers.   There are many complex processes involved and more research is always necessary (Svenning, et al, 2016). The issue has generated an EU Platform on the Coexistence Between People and Large Carnivores whose mission is: 'To promote ways and means to minimize, and wherever possible find solutions to, conflicts between human interests and the presence of large carnivore species, by exchanging knowledge and by working together in an open-ended, constructive and mutually respectful way' (2014). Resistance to rewilding has also happened where there are seen to be animal welfare issues such as in the Oostvaardersplassen reserve in the Netherlands.   Here animals that we are used to seeing cared for, such as cattle and ponies, have – in line with non-interventionism – been left to fend for themselves rather than being given additional food in hard times (Vera, 2009; ICMO, 2010). There is a direct ecological conflict here between allowing natural processes to cope with peaks and troughs in food supply in the usual painful way and intervening to manage that process either by feeding or hastening the demise of suffering animals.

Before discussing further the issue of rewilding farmland I want to look at a relatively new ethical theory that potentially offers scope for accommodating the breadth of issues involved in these tensions.. I will then return to these issues through the vehicle of a case

study of upland farming in the Lake District to see how this theory could play out in a real situation.

Responsive Cohesion (exposition)

The theory of responsive cohesion is an approach developed by Warwick Fox as a response to what he sees as the inadequacies of other ethical theories to offer guidance when faced with environmental problems. In *A Theory of General Ethics* (2006) he sets out the need for a General Ethics to address a range of traditional inter-human ethical problem situations and those that our relationship to the socio/cultural realm and the natural world present. The theory of responsive cohesion represents his attempt to develop a truly general ethics. Along with other ethical theories it tries to answer the basic ethical question: 'how should we live'? And it does so, unusually, by looking at the qualities of structure or form of organisation that things should have.

For Fox, things (anything at all) must exhibit one – or some mixture – of three broadly defined categories in terms of their organisation. They can be disorganised (chaotic, all over the place), they can be fixed (rigid, unbending) or they can be relatively fluid (where the parts respond to each other). Things can also move between these categories such that the disordered settles into order or the fluid can become fixed. Fox refers to these three basic states of organisation as discohesion, fixed cohesion and responsive cohesion.   He argues that if we take any realm of endeavour or any entity and ask considered judges what makes a good X, the answer, regardless of how it is couched, will be directly translatable into 'the one with the most responsive cohesion'. For example, we could ask about the best political system, would it be discohesive lawless anarchy, rigid dictatorship or responsively cohesive democracy? When we investigate why a politically informed person would prefer democracy it is going to have something to do with how the parts respond to one another. Democracy only works if there is an answering to and an accommodation between the parts (the people, the parliament, the judiciary, a free press, access to education and so on) rather than a rigid form. Democracy hangs together by virtue of the flexible but structured answering to each other of these salient features of the political system. When we feel that the form of democracy has let us down and we try to improve its structure or work out what went wrong the solutions proposed tend to be along the lines of making the form of democracy more responsively cohesive, i.e., making it more representative, helping the

electorate to be more informed, taking into account the wider picture, and so on. Politically informed judges do not tend to want to move towards either the fixed cohesion of a dictatorship or the discohesion of lawlessness. Parliamentary democracy is one of the ways that a society can make it more likely that the decisions are made by informed judges.

We can ask a 'what's the best' question across any field and get the same answer. Whether we consider a sports match, a play, a form of education, landscape (Thompson, 2013), gardening (Brook, 2010), architecture (Radford, 2009, 2010; Fox, 2009), environmental politics (McCullough, 2009, 2010) or agriculture (Brook, 2018), the one that exhibits the most responsive cohesion will be the one that is judged to have the greater value within that field of endeavour. Things that are discohesive, where there is little or no relationship between the parts, and things that are too rigidly fixed are not typically valued highly. Indeed, many of these things are actively disvalued, for example, a bizarre avant-garde play with no sense, meaning, or perceivable structure (discohesive) or a formulaic drama with bored actors simply going through the motions where there is no sense of life or original thought (fixed cohesion).

Once alerted to these categories we can all recognise and use them to evaluate things, and have always done so in other ways. However, whereas in the past these evaluations have been specific to the norms and language of the particular domains of interest with which they have been concerned, we can now see that responsive cohesion lies at the basis of these evaluations regardless of the domain in which they occur. What it therefore offers, in comparison to specific individual evaluations, is a unified account of the structural basis that underpins these evaluations. It identifies the structure that underlies not just what our general preferences tend to be (seen as a problem by Chao, 2010: 230) but also the preferences of informed judges, i.e., not just personal whim. For Fox this means that we can then see what things or situations could, in most cases, be defended as good or bad for things of their type.

For the issues that I will address in the case study below it is important also to explain another element of responsive cohesion – the theory of contexts.

Responsive cohesion is claimed to be a good thing that we should aim to preserve, create and generally promote, but we need also to understand that to value a particular way that something can be organised requires understanding its context. There is no point in

eulogising about a wonderful line of poetry that flows beautifully if it doesn't fit the poem and creates a jarring effect that disrupts the whole. Likewise a rabbit, as a complex living organism, is a preeminent example of responsive cohesion, but introducing it to an ecosystem where it is not indigenous can bring about catastrophic effects to the much larger amount of responsive cohesion that was already established between the indigenous species.   To cope with this extrapolation from individual instances to wider concerns Fox develops the theory of contexts (2006). He argues that there are three broad contexts: 1. the biophysical realm (Gaia/the ecosphere and its subsidiary ecosystems); 2. the human (linguistically-enabled) socio-cultural realm; and 3. the human-constructed realm (the built environment, human material artefacts of all kinds). These contexts are nested within each other such that each subsidiary context is dependent upon the more embracing context or contexts of which it is a part. We don't get lines of poetry without the human imagination that is dependent on the socio-cultural realm, which, in turn, is dependent on the biophysical realm. If there is clash between responsively cohesive larger contexts and responsively cohesive subsidiary contexts or items (such as in the ecosystem-rabbit example given above), then endorsing the value of responsively cohesive outcomes means that the more embracing context should have the larger share of the say in determining the best path to take. Although Brown (2008: 7) notes that Fox's introduction of these different contexts could potentially introduce too many complex layers for decision making, it can equally well be argued that the destination of Fox's argument here - that is, his priority ordering principle - clarifies rather than complicates our thinking about how to proceed while not over simplifying the description of these situations.

 Given that naturally occurring ecosystems (if we can still use that term as short hand for complex webs of interlocking species in a naturally regenerating environment) contain massive amounts of responsive cohesion as a direct effect of their evolution, it could be suggested that any interference is always wrong.   However, the basic credo of the theory of responsive cohesion is outlined thus:

> In being responsive to your own goals and desires – that is, in living *your* life - do what you reasonably can to *preserve* examples of the relational quality of responsive cohesion where you find them, *regenerate or create* examples of

it in and through your chosen undertakings, *reflect and reinforce* it in your

judgements and ways of proceeding, and so on (Fox, 2006: 302).

 The "in living *your* life" formulation allows for the fact that we need to build shelter and grow food.   We, human beings, as living organisms are examples of responsive cohesion. Our socio/cultural systems and our material creations can also exhibit responsive cohesion. How much value should that really give us over the biophysical realm? John Brown raises this problem in his discussion of the application of responsive cohesion to aesthetics (2008:10). If it meant that we do just have a free hand then the theory, developed to justify a benign but workable environmental ethic, would fail.   However, I would argue that for any wicked problem a simple solution is not possible. What the theory can do is point out that in our decisions about landscape we can use the idea of responsive cohesion to guide us to resolutions that allow for our flourishing and that of other species and nature in general and thus support the biosphere.

English Lake District as a case study

Having discussed the value of heritage landscapes and place narratives that create meaning for those living there and the wider culture, and some of the ideas behind rewilding, it is now possible to look at a specific area where there is tension between these two approaches. This is not a detailed case study of specific farms but takes the English Lake District as a broad area and raises particular aspects of the problem situation to see how one might go about applying the theory of responsive cohesion to this.

A major point of contention is between the tradition of upland sheep farming and the rewilders' aim of more self-sustaining biodiverse ecosystems.

The geology of the Lake District has impacted on agriculture such that much of the land used for farming is, in agricultural terms, 'marginal'. This means it is tough to earn a living from farming there. Typical Lakeland farms have three zones: lower pasture in the valley bottoms (improved land that produces hay for feeding sheep in winter); fell side fields (semi-improved land that provides good grazing for sheep); and upper fells beyond the stone walls (where sheep can graze in summer to lessen their impact on the lower fields). Though based on much earlier systems the characteristic formation of the Lakeland farms, with their stone walls, arise from late 17th century and 18th century agricultural expansion

(LDNPA, 2010). The grazing of sheep on the open fells where they stay within their own local area without any walls or fences is known as hefting. The sheep need to be hardy breeds such as Herdwick and Swaledale. The flocks from several farms may mingle but they do not leave the area from some learned sense, passed from ewe to lamb, of where they belong. It is relevant to note that the idea of hefting operates in debates about sense of place as a metaphor for people's sense of belonging. Thus the practice bears a significant symbolic weight.

It is the grazing that keeps the Lakeland fells largely free of trees and prevents a growth of more diverse plant species and the increase in other wildlife that greater plant diversity would allow. The practice is also what creates the characteristic landscape of visible cragginess with the geological bones of the topology more evident than a more verdant landscape would allow. It is this cragginess that inspired the Romantic poets and painters, already attuned to the Alpine landscape, to revere the Lake District.   Hence we have a rich layering of traditional practices and cultural meanings. Although there can be a sharp distinction between the local farming view of the aesthetic value of the fells and that of the wider culture or other residents inspired by a Romantic aesthetic. There is a telling instance of this juxtaposition in the account of the shepherd James Rebanks's experience of viewing the landscape with a Wainwright guide (one of the popular beautifully hand-drawn walking guides to the lakes):

> So I was looking down at the landscape farmed by my Father's friends and cross-checking it against the guide. It struck me powerfully that there was scarcely a trace of any of the things we cared about in what Wainwright had written. Apart from the odd dot on the map for a farm or a wall, nothing from our world appeared in those pages. I wondered whether the people on that mountain saw the working side of that landscape, and whether it mattered. …What you don't see you don't care about (Rebanks, 2015:88).

Rebanks's book (and similarly Pettier's film 'Addicted to Sheep', which documents a year in the life of a North Pennine farming family) gives a very real sense of being embedded in a place and community and the meaning that comes about through the seasonal practices and struggles with a harsh landscape.   We need to understand this attachment to place in

order to make sense of why a family would work so hard when the financial gains are so small.

The finances of upland farming are an economic nonsense, and even using common land through hefting does not help this (Davies, et al 2008:12). For example, sheep have to be sheared but the wool is worth less than it costs to shear them. The production costs of farming outputs exceeds their economic value and thus upland farms are heavily reliant on various subsides and government schemes to make them viable. Historically farmers would have also worked in the various mining and quarrying activities to supplement a farming income. Now farmers can diversify their business to create additional income from the tourism that relies on the characteristic landscapes. Government subsidies and payments also recognise the role of farmers within their local communities.

> Farmers are often seen as the glue that holds the community together-which generates a strong protective feeling towards farmers from those living in the uplands-and a real fear that their subsequent loss would destroy the community. Evidence shows that the public sentiments are that local economies and communities would suffer if farming was allowed to decline and that there would also be a detrimental impact upon the way the landscape looks. (DEFRA, 2010:17).

Those who focus on the human heritage aspect of the Lake District and its traditional aesthetic appeal applaud the assistance that ensures that farming practices can be continued. This is one form of conservation and another form of conservation is focused on biodiversity and the dynamic self-sustaining ecosystems that increased biodiversity affords (Wood, 1997). For a strident critique of the former we could look to George Monbiot's popular writings on rewilding where conservation efforts and farming subsides both come under fire.

> Conservation sites must be maintained in what is called "favourable condition": which means the condition in which they were found when they were designated. More often than not this is a state of extreme depletion: the merest scraping of what was once a vibrant and dynamic ecosystem. The ecological disasters we call nature reserves are often kept in this depleted state through intense intervention: cutting and burning any trees that return; grazing by domestic animals at greater densities and for longer periods than would ever be found in nature. … In Wales, on 2010

figures, the average subsidy for sheep farms on the hills is £53,000. Average net farm income is £33,000. The contribution the farmer makes to his income by raising sheep and cattle, in other words, is minus £20,000 (Monbiot, 2013a).

Guided by European directives on how conservation is done, where indicator species are used to measure and ensure stasis rather than dynamic change, we have a strange alliance between sheep used as a conservation tool and as a kind of social glue for particular communities. Does this make sense as a way to manage or respond to landscape? When viewing a film such as 'Addicted to Sheep' or reading James Rebanks's account it is easy to appreciate the dedication of the hill farmers and see a kind of nobility in their striving for the perfect example of a sheep breed. However, it can begin to look like an expensive hobby when we consider the subsidies that the taxpayer is contributing. The justification of maintaining the heritage landscape for us all to enjoy can also sound odd when we know that aesthetic values are mutable (Brook, 2013:115) and if anything people are finding value in wilder more vegetated and varied landscapes and could begin to view the fells, as in the highlands of Scotland, as barren landscapes whose heritage is one of human domination.

In the Lake District there is already one area that is attempting to find a route through these competing ideas about conservation and meaningful landscapes. The Wild Ennerdale project has set in train moving a traditional uplands farming area to one that has more space for wildness. Their vision is "to allow the evolution of Ennerdale as a wild valley for the benefit of people, relying more on natural processes to shape its landscape and ecology". The Stewardship plan is carefully worded to avoid the idea of "abandoning land" or creating wilderness by referring to a "sense of wildness" that can be experienced even close to settlements and in a cultivated landscape (2006:12). There is obviously a range of stakeholders including landowners, the National Park, visitors, and the local community who need to be placated about changes in management regimes. The idea though is definitely to give nature free-ish reign and the expectation that this will create a richer, more biodiverse ecology and landscape.

In all the discussion and debate of these conflicting views of landscape can the theory of responsive cohesion help? We should begin by identifying the domains of interest and salient features of the problem situation (Fox, 2006:128). The following will only be

indications of a route this might take, but it serves to demonstrate the complexity of the situation.

If we take the individual farm the patterns of activity across the seasons between shepherd and flock can demonstrate responsive cohesion. A shepherd who turned their sheep out on to the upper fells to a fixed calendar date, rather than in response to the weather, would be exhibiting a rigidity and lack this quality. A shepherd who bred lowland sheep out of some whimsical fancy and expected them to survive a Cumbrian winter would be in a discohesive relationship with the land, as would one who simply neglected to care for their flock or repair equipment that would be needed. If we asked thoughtful and informed shepherds about the best sheep at a show, or sheep dog to work with, or way of bringing the sheep down from the fell, their answer is always going to reflect elements of that flexible way that responsively cohesive things are organised. At the local level of interwoven practices traditional upland farming will have a lot of responsive cohesion and this extends out to aspects of community cohesion as well. For example, this is seen in the way sheep fairs allow farmers to exchange tups (rams) to ensure genetic diversity in the flock and choose exactly the qualities that their specific ewes need to produce strong healthy lambs.

To some environmental philosophers it might seem that the same results could be gained more directly through environmental pragmatism (Stephens, 2008: 489), in which theoretical abstractions are downplayed in favour of dealing directly with practical problems in order to bring about desired results. Against that, it can equally well be argued that there can be no anchor to what is meant by 'desired results' in the absence of an argued for (i.e., theoretical) framework of understanding. Also, when exploring examples of responsive cohesion it can simply sound like common sense or good practice. However, what the theory attempts to do is dig under those common practices to see the structural basis of them in such a way that this common element can be found. Then when we lose our way with something we can use that common structural element as a compass to question what we are doing and guide us to another way of thinking about it.

With our Lake District example, if we take a wider context the responsive cohesion seen at the farm level starts to break down. For example, the relationship between the farm produce and the market is discohesive. There is a mismatch between the meat and wool market demands of the 18th century and those of the 21st century and the upland farmer is

trapped between that difference. There is an element of fixed cohesion here, where production choices are fixed by tradition regardless of the market. The new market of touristic views and countryside experiences helps to fill the gap such that the farmer is now producing scenic landscapes rather than food per se. However, any connection between the benefits of this new productivity and income currently arrives via a tortuous route of subsidies and environmental payments.   Thus by broadening out the context to, for example, European (or post Brexit, governmental) funding structures farming seems to make some economic sense, but are these funding structures themselves responsively cohesive? For those trying to navigate European subsidies they seem dominated by the kind of fixity which results in many absurdities. For example, the large subsidies paid from taxes to wealthy landowners, of what could be premium agricultural land or much richer wildlife habitat, in order for them to maintain it for grouse shooting.

Thus in the local socio/cultural realm there can be a lot of responsive cohesion but it is funded by an unwieldy fixed system rather than a direct valuing of what is produced. To understand why it is not properly valued we can again look to the wider context of the market. Here we see that, for example, the demand for wool has decreased due to the prevalence of synthetic fibres, which seem to offer convenience and cheapness.   The wider environmental impact of the production of synthetic fibres, the social impact of sweat shop conditions in overseas production, and eventual landfill costs when worn out, is ignored when the ubiquitous cheap polyester 'fleece' is compared to the expensive locally produced pure wool jacket.   Moreover, the full environmental impact is only just coming to light. New research points to the ordinary washing of polyester fleece as a source of plastic microfibers polluting the oceans (Browne, 2015). Once we extend the context to the biosphere the products of upland farming can be viewed differently. A similar examination could be made of the environmental and welfare concerns and nutritional value of intensively reared animals and those with open grazing on small farms. Small farms are responsively cohesive on the small scale but do not fit with the wider socio-cultural context of global markets. However, those global markets are not themselves responsively cohesive with the wider biosphere. Even taking into account the 'in living your own life' aspect of the credo, with its accommodation of personal human goals, these global systems currently operate as if the biosphere is eternally able to provide resources and soak up pollution.

How to respond on the local level is thus hugely complex, but if our aim should be to "*preserve* examples of the relational quality of responsive cohesion where you find them" and to, "*regenerate or create*" examples of it (Fox, 2006) then perhaps the theory of responsive cohesion could be seen as generating the following answer.

Upland farming in the Lake District should be maintained in at least some areas large enough to retain a viable community of interlocking farms for the benefits their history brings to culture at large as examples of a farming system on 'marginal' land and the aesthetic qualities of the characteristic landscape and the community that this creates. (The lack of fit with the global market should be addressed by increasing political pressure to correct imbalances that reward environmentally and socially destructive practices.) Other areas of the Lake District should be allowed to rewild with a restriction on grazing and some active conservation efforts to help dynamic ecosystems to get established that support a rich variety of wildlife. Ways should be found for the local population and visitors to engage with naturally regenerating areas for the physical and psychological wellbeing and educative benefits that this brings. However, this needs to be in ways that are respectful of wildlife. Through this mix of traditional farming and relatively tourist friendly rewilding the Lake District can continue the narrative of its human story and reconnect to the longer narrative of its ecological story in a way that represents local responsive cohesion in the context of the biosphere. If this could be brought about through informed and wide deliberation it would also present a picture of what the currently discohesive global socio/cultural context should aim for.

A conclusion such as this might look like a compromise that is trying to please everyone or just like motherhood and apple pie. However, in any situation the question 'would this change be more responsively cohesive than that one' is a very useful one to ask. Though based on human beings' informed judgements about a state of affairs it takes us beyond personal preference or preconceptions, we need to think of the wider context and the impact of our actions on things of value. Certainly choosing which jumper to buy, between the synthetic and the local wool one, does suddenly seem both more complex and, somehow, easier. Responsive cohesion is never going to provide definitive answers or hard and fast rules of right or wrong, and for an ethical theory that could be seen as a fatal flaw. However, what it does do is broaden the perspective out to the biosphere whilst recognising

the relevance of local values that need to be brought into and honoured in a conversation about where to from here.

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