Stances on the Land
Political Perspectives on Land Use Governance in Vermont

by
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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Geography
University of Toronto

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2011

Abstract

Vermont, like many rural places in the developed world, has been the destination of many urban migrants seeking lifestyle amenities unavailable in the city. This migration has been blamed for intractable conflicts over land use governance, with newcomers pitted against long-time residents on such issues as wilderness designation, agricultural impacts and motorized recreation. How accurate, though, are these representations of political visions polarized along lines of residential status?

This dissertation maps out the complexity of popular outlooks on land use governance in Vermont using a Q-method survey and semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the survey found evidence for two distinct perspectives on land use governance, which were termed Green Governance and Government Scepticism. While distinct, these perspectives were not diametrically opposed; on many issues of concern to one group the other group was neutral. These groups did not map directly onto residential status; in particular, long-time residents were clearly evident in both groups. Looking deeper into the stances on land use, tensions between stances are evident at both the level of the group and the individual. The dissertation traces these
tensions and considers their implications for how individuals are enrolled in larger political projects such as neoliberalism. In many cases, uncertain enrolment suggests places where groups could productively engage each other and develop less antagonistic relationships.

The dissertation fits the political orientations it examines into a broader cultural reading of social divisions that goes beyond residential status. It posits the existence of cultural complexes with an array of components contributing to social identity. These components – which include residential status and political orientation – influence each other without being determining. Compared with more established moral economy frameworks, this model seeks to provide a more flexible theorization of the relationship between social identity and political outlook.
Acknowledgments

Researching and writing a dissertation will always be a challenging process with constant twists and turns and an inevitable uncertainty about what’s around the next corner. The only way through it is with the unstinting support of family, friends, mentors and fellow students. I gratefully acknowledge my receipt of such support throughout this undertaking.

Scott Prudham has been an amazing advisor throughout, consistently showing faith in my work any time my own faith was flagging. He encouraged me to find my own voice, at the same time raising alternative perspectives for my consideration. I also thank my other committee members – Sue Ruddick, Michael Bunce and Tenley Conway – and my departmental examiner – Ken MacDonald – for their excellent insights and their generous engagement with my ideas. The external examiner for my dissertation, Gail Hollander, gracefully combined a rigorous engagement and a sympathetic attitude in the task of assessing my work; I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know her in the process. The rest of the faculty and staff in the Geography department at the University of Toronto have been an invaluable resource and have done so much to create the vibrant intellectual climate that I have enjoyed during my time in Toronto. They are too many to name, but my appreciation is sincere.

My fellow graduate students have been my lifeline. Our common experience was the basis of deep friendships that developed far beyond the confines of the academy. In particular I want to thank the members of the Social Construction of Nature reading group and of the Politics of the Environment working group that Scott Prudham organized. These informal groups brought together intellectual inquiry and camaraderie in the perfect balance. Two people deserve special mention. Valentine Cadieux has been an intellectual fellow traveler since the day we met and inspires me with her contagious enthusiasm and boundless interests. Kate Parizeau in my mind typifies committed scholarship and has been a remarkable source of support throughout this process. The rest of the fellow inhabitants of the basement and then the fifth floor of Sid Smith have contributed to conversations and experiences that will stay with me for a lifetime.

In Vermont, I benefited from the incredible generosity of the people who agreed to participate in my research. I found them warm, honest and engaged, and this dissertation would not have been
possible without their goodwill and cooperation. I look forward to the discussions that this work sparks.

I thank the Dexter Foundation and in particular Mary Jane Dexter for believing in my work and supporting me to carry it out. Thanks also to the Department of Geography, the School of Graduate Studies and the Centre for the Study of the United States, all at the University of Toronto, for financial support.

Gatherings of friends and family seem to be the rule rather than the exception in Wolcott. Our regular return trips to Vermont have never failed to rejuvenate and invigorate me for the work that I set out for myself. I cherish the feelings of warmth and ease that I always found within my extended family (where the word “family” is to be understood in its most generous terms). In particular, I owe a great debt to my parents, Janice Roy and Steven Young, not only for the obvious fact of bringing me up and supporting me, but also for their help in bringing this dissertation into being. They were both excellent readers and their familiarity with the work I was undertaking made them indispensable when I had specific doubts about which I needed reassurance. Thanks to my aunt and uncle, Gail Osherenko and Oran Young, for their longstanding commitment to my academic pursuits and for the countless strategy sessions whenever we were in Wolcott at the same time. My grandmother, Eleanor Young, and my much missed grandfather, John Young, planted the seed for this study when they bought a farm in Wolcott after the war and started growing Christmas trees on it. In so doing they joined a community that clearly enriched their lives and those of the people who followed them.

To my husband Jan, I cannot convey in words the depth of gratitude I have for the way you have supported me through this process. Your willingness to leave your native Montreal and follow me to Toronto speaks volumes. Your patience as the years went by was more than anyone could hope to expect. Above all, your faith in me kept me going at the darkest moments. This dissertation would have been impossible without you.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2: Moral economies ........................................................................................................ 23

2.1 Introduction: Moral economy and the study of popular politics .............................. 23

2.2 Moral Economies, Part I ................................................................................................. 28

2.2.1 The classics of moral economy ............................................................................... 28

2.3 Moral economies, Part II ................................................................................................ 40

2.3.1 Scott’s fraught relationship with objectivity ....................................................... 41

2.3.2 Causal models and credibility ................................................................................. 49

2.3.3 Hegemony: maintaining consent by balancing policies ....................................... 53

2.3.4 Political projects and neoliberalism ........................................................................ 58

2.3.5 Potentials and pluripotency ..................................................................................... 62

Chapter 3: Methods – Interviews and Survey ........................................................................ 67

3.1 Interviews ....................................................................................................................... 69

3.1.1 Sampling .................................................................................................................. 69

3.1.2 Conduct of Interviews .......................................................................................... 74

3.2 Survey ............................................................................................................................. 79

3.2.1 The content of the survey ..................................................................................... 83

Chapter 4: Newcomers and Vermonters .............................................................................. 88

4.1 Literature on rural in-migration ...................................................................................... 95

4.2 Cultural complexes on the ground .................................................................................. 105

4.2.1 Representations of the groups ................................................................................. 106

4.2.2 Experiences of social conflict ............................................................................... 110

4.2.3 Honorary locals and outlander Vermonters .......................................................... 120
4.2.4 Acquiring local status ........................................................................................................ 124

Chapter 5: Sceptics and Greens: Factor groups from Q analysis ............................................. 131

5.1 Factor 1: Green Governance ................................................................................................. 136

5.2 Factor 2: Government Scepticism ......................................................................................... 141

Chapter 6: Working the land: land uses in a political context .................................................... 149

6.1 Agriculture .......................................................................................................................... 151

6.2 Forestry ................................................................................................................................ 158

6.3 Residential development ...................................................................................................... 167

6.4 Hunting and Recreation .................................................................................................... 175

6.5 Governance ......................................................................................................................... 180

Chapter 7: Negotiations ............................................................................................................. 193

7.1 Vignettes ............................................................................................................................. 196

7.1.1 Larry Kingsbury ........................................................................................................... 196

7.1.2 Ken Lines .................................................................................................................... 202

7.1.3 William Arsenault ....................................................................................................... 206

7.2 Political Projects and the Ambiguities of Enrolment ............................................................ 213

Chapter 8: Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 227

Sources ....................................................................................................................................... 241
List of Tables

Table 1: Categories of land use and access groups guiding sample selection.............................. 70

Table 2: Research Participant Characteristics (all names are pseudonyms; any resemblance to the names of actual residents of Vermont is purely coincidental)................................................................. 77

Table 3: Factor loadings of respondents on Green Governance (GG) and Government Scepticism (GS) factors; loadings significant at the p<0.01 level highlighted........................................ 133

Table 4: Participant Characteristics ........................................................................................... 240
List of Figures

Figure 1: Study area in Vermont .................................................................................................. 16
Figure 2: Population of Vermont Towns, 2000 ......................................................................... 17
Figure 3: Physiography of Vermont .......................................................................................... 18
Figure 4: Parcels and Elevation -- Belvidere and Johnson ......................................................... 19
Figure 5: Land Use/Cover and Elevation .................................................................................. 20
Figure 6: Publicly Conserved Lands in Study Area .................................................................... 21
Figure 7: Vermont Population Change by Town, 1990-2000 ...................................................... 22
Figure 8: Example of statements plotted on two respondent axes .............................................. 81
Figure 9: Initial eigenvalues of all 32 factors extracted by Principal Components factor analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 132
Figure 10: Survey participants plotted by loading on Green Governance factor and Government Scepticism factor ............................................................................................................ 135
List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide  (Phase 1 interviews)................................................................. 250
Appendix 2: Selected Participant responses plotted against Green Governance (Factor 1) and Government Sceptic (Factor 2) averages............................................................................................................ 251
Appendix 3: Green Governance and Government Sceptic factor rankings............................ 254
Chapter 1: Introduction

My brother and his family just moved into a new house in Wolcott, Vermont, the town where we grew up. After two and a half years of living in someone else’s house, this move represented a welcome return to autonomy, to the opportunity to incrementally build up the connections that invest a place with personal significance and transform it into a home. It was an exciting and long-awaited step.

At the same time, this move involved significantly more mixed feelings than might be apparent at first glance. The house site was part of our grandparents’ Christmas tree farm, and the whole extended family is happy that my brother’s family has decided to root a few more generations in that soil. The siting of the house itself raised difficult choices, though, and in the end the best site turned out to be in the middle of a hayfield that my father’s cousin spent considerable effort improving several years ago. No one relished the idea of converting to residential use one of the few pieces of land on the farm that was still in productive agricultural use. But well-drained soils are valuable not only because the tractor doesn’t get stuck in them, but also because they pass the “perc test” that allows you to put a septic system in. The hayfield’s fate was sealed by the fact that it was in the corner of the cleared land and, crucially, had the best view of the Lowell Mountains to the north.

It’s not just the loss of the hayfield that leaves me feeling ambivalent about seeing a house go in. One of the things I love about the site is that when you’re walking west on the dirt road between my parents’ and grandmother’s houses, it is exactly at that point that you emerge out of a mile of heavy woods on both sides of the road to see one of the more breathtaking vistas in Wolcott. I liked that whoever was walking or driving that road was free to pause and enjoy it. Now, even if the house didn’t block the view, it marks the spot as private property and, out of respect for the owners’ privacy, people are likely to just keep moving.
In the past, people didn’t just stop at that site for the view. It was also the best way for hunters to access the fields, woods and swamp below without disturbing my grandmother. It was kind of a back door into an extensive hunting ground, and during hunting season more often than not there would be a truck parked there while its occupants tried their luck against the deer or turkeys or bears or rabbits. For those from the metropole, this might not seem like a land use to cry over, but within the state there is a strong sympathy for hunting even among non-hunters and a recognition of the value of keeping land open to your neighbours for hunting and other purposes. In all likelihood, many hunters will still use my grandmother’s land but it will be a little bit harder and feel a little bit less welcoming now that that access point is blocked.

Although my family is fairly sensitive to the land use issues raised by residential development, when these abstract concerns become personalized by the need for a place to live and the factors that will affect your quality of life in that place, it’s not surprising that the house was built where it was. Similar outcomes are visible throughout the state. A friend of mine confessed some guilt to putting his house – a prefab no less, he says with a chuckle – in a pasture. But again, there were a lot of compelling reasons that led him to that choice. And in the end it’s an open question whether the “working landscape” that was a horse pasture is working any less now that it’s supporting the flock of chickens, the few head of sheep and the extensive garden that feeds my friend’s family. This is not a black and white issue.

Complicating the issue further is the question of who is occupying the new houses that are cropping up on Vermont’s hillsides. While Vermont hasn’t seen the tremendous migration of states like Nevada in the past years, it has nevertheless had a substantial proportion of newcomers arrive to the state. In the year 2000, for every 1000 residents of the state 123 of them did not live there five years earlier (Perry, 2003). In that same period 119 people per thousand left the state, so the net migration was relatively small. However, these figures represent a substantial turnover of the state’s population in five years. Moreover, the phenomenon of migration has a cultural significance that goes beyond the numbers. The presence of newcomers (or as they are colloquially known “flatlanders”) in Vermont is seen by many long-time

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1 Vermont’s hilly terrain differs from that of southern New England and the New York metropolitan area from which a lot of newcomers to Vermont hail. The term “flatlander” highlights that difference, and carries a
residents as the root of the conflicts over land use that have become an increasing feature of rural life in the state. Flatlanders, the charge goes, come to Vermont with their money and their romanticized views of life in the country and cause havoc with traditional livelihoods when they try to impose their views on local communities. So the fear of many as they drive by another construction site is that once the last nail is pounded and the family is moved in, the next step is going to be the posting of “no trespassing” signs around the perimeter of the property, and soon afterwards a new set of faces at town meeting adding their voices to the call for municipal zoning regulations.

If the sight of backhoes and bulldozers arriving on an undisturbed corner of land can provoke anxiety among the neighbours, much of that anxiety stems from not knowing who will be moving in and what the impacts of their arrival will be. There is a big difference between, on the one hand, watching a neighbour’s daughter that you’ve known her whole life building her first house and, on the other hand, seeing construction commence on a site that belongs to someone about whom the only information you know is that he’s from New York. When little is known about the owners, the construction process itself may provide the only indicators of who will be arriving in a few months time. The size of the building, the style, the siting – all can be read for what they say about the owners’ orientation to the landscape and, by extension, to others who use the landscape. Whether these readings are accurate or not, they are part of a larger cultural “decoding” that tries to fill in absent information about political views or stances on key issues using whatever signifiers are at hand.

The energy that goes into these decodings and the anxiety about what the decodings will reveal hints at the depth of feeling that land use issues can raise. And in fact, the history of land use politics in Vermont, at both the local and the state levels, has been full of acrimony. Within that broad topic, the range of issues is extensive, spanning the designation of wilderness areas on public lands, the regulation of development on private land, oversight of forestry and agricultural practices, and many other points in between. What is common across these issues is that there are generally two groups facing off against each other, and the composition of the groups shows a certain consistency from one issue to the next. These two groups are commonly represented as pejorative connotation. In Chapter Four I introduce the term “outlander” to replace “flatlander” in my discussion of cultural complexes, hoping for a more neutral tone.
the native Vermonters and the newcomers. The fact that it is the “Vermont” side of the debates who most readily make use of this representation is not accidental – by stamping their position on the issues with the imprimatur of the “real Vermonters” they gain a legitimacy in the debate that is not available to flatlanders. This isn’t to say that the representation is necessarily false either, simply that a complex interplay between representation and power is taking place.

This dissertation seeks to map out the complexity of popular outlooks on land use in Vermont and how these outlooks translate into normative stances on governance – beliefs about what kinds of policies, actions or institutional structures are appropriate or inappropriate. I am particularly interested in how some of these normative stances are pulled together into characteristic outlooks that residents of a community recognize as belonging to specific social groups. The interplay between stances that individuals express and collective or shared views is particularly important in these considerations. The interview and survey data that I use is in the first instance clearly the expression of individual research participants. At the same time, the stances and ideas that they express are not formed in isolation; the communities and social groups to which a person belongs have a formative influence on her normative outlook. To some extent, the influence is due to a felt need to conform to the collective views of the group.

One of the key aims of my research is to investigate how people develop a picture of these collective views. I look at the processes by which groups are identified and attributes are assigned to them. The attributes that I focus on are normative stances (stances such as “we have a responsibility to preserve the health of the land”) but I consider attributes such as class, participation in key practices, and social connections as well.

One of my entry points into the complexity of normative stances is the tensions that are apparent in a participant’s discussion of land use issues. The stances that participants express never have the internal consistency that collective views are represented as having. Some participants come close, but many of them express significant reservations or alternative perspectives. Frequently a participant perceives more than one value or interest as relevant and compelling, yet they may

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2 In recent years, impersonal third person singular constructions have run afoul of the desire for gender neutrality. Unfortunately the effort to avoid them makes for convoluted sentences. So I use these constructions and generally make the gender feminine, to balance out all the masculine “impersons” (to coin a term) that fill the history of the English language. There’s an occasional “he” thrown in to keep the reader on her toes, but in all cases she should imagine the pronoun to extend to other genders as well.
point in opposite directions. His or her effort to resolve that tension may lead to a set of publicly expressed stances that display a reasonable degree of consistency, but there may still be submerged threads representing concerns that linger under the surface.

Community membership and social interaction are one set of factors that shapes shared outlooks. Another factor, related to these but analytically distinct, can be identified in more formalized political efforts to convince people to adopt a stance and support specific actions; I call such an effort a political project. Political projects articulate stances toward an *objective*, whether explicit or implicit. The choice of objective and the justification for that choice is a distinguishing feature of a political project: projects whose primary goal is individual autonomy and freedom differ from those that first seek to provide for the security and well-being of every member of a society. But playing at least as important a role in differentiating political projects are the various *claims* and predictions about what the outcome of a certain course of action will be – whether it will contribute to the objective or detract from it. Such claims about how the political realm works are one type of *causal model*, a notion that I argue is important to understanding why people adopt the normative stances that they do.

Political projects aim to bring about the enactment of policies that are in line with their objectives and their causal models. In order to do so, they seek to enrol supporters. This is where the deployment of labels such as “Vermont” come back into the picture. In this dissertation I treat social identities like “Vermont” as an ensemble of components coming together in what I call a *cultural complex*. Shared political views are one of the components that create a feeling of kinship among people within a cultural complex.

The cultural complex has a degree of flexibility, so that someone who displays attributes that are characteristic of the complex may have non-conforming political views and still generally fit in and find acceptance. Despite this flexibility, the cultural complex exerts a subtle or not-so-subtle pressure to adopt particular politics on defining issues such as land use. Adding further complexity is the fact that many voices vie for the authority to speak for the community and to represent its political views. Cultural complexes provide a powerful means for political projects to enrol supporters, however the projects have to work hard to achieve primacy within the community of the complex.
With these concepts in hand, it is now possible to revisit the tension between normative stances that individuals struggle to resolve. Political projects, sometimes operating through the medium of a cultural complex, present an individual with a relatively consistent set of stances and try to convince him to adopt them. They offer a means of organizing one’s actions and views in conformance with a limited number of priorities and provide reassurance that a given course of action will produce a specific effect. In the course of the dissertation I build the argument that people are generally cagey about buying into such political visions wholesale. While their discussions display recognizable elements from key political projects, they are also apt to raise and consider alternative perspectives, frequently leaving the question open at the end. The polarization and conviction that are a feature of much political discourse are far less common than the political projects would have us believe. Put another way, enrolment in political projects is less complete than we often assume, which implies that there is significant opportunity for productive political discussion to open up new coalitions or lines of action on land use governance and related issues.

* * * * *

The town where I grew up, Wolcott, was the town that served as the base for my research. From that base I interviewed people throughout Lamoille County – on the eastern edge of which Wolcott is situated – as well as from three towns to the north and east (see Figure 1: map of study area). Part of the reason for my choice to study the area around Wolcott was pragmatic – it is the place in Vermont about which I have the deepest knowledge and in which I have the densest social connections. In undertaking a study that incorporated a substantial cultural component, it made sense to build on those assets. Equally importantly, however, Wolcott and the towns surrounding it serve as relatively good representatives of rural Vermont as a whole.

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Although I represent political projects here as rather clear-cut, later discussions reveal some of the difficulties of precisely defining what a political project is. This adds to the indeterminacy that surround enrolment, which is a major argument of this dissertation.
Figure 2 shows a map of Vermont towns classified by population. As can be seen from the map, the size of the towns in the study areas covers a broad range from Belvidere with a population of 295 to Morristown with 5,970 – a range that is spread along the middle of the population profile of the state’s towns. The fact that a town with just under 6,000 residents is in the largest 10% of the towns in Vermont attests to the rural character of the state; the largest city, Burlington, stood at just under 40,000 people in 2000.

Figure 2 also shows the relationship of the study area to other population centres in Vermont. As can be clearly seen, the study area falls in the middle of a population gradient in northern Vermont running from the Champlain valley in the west to the Northeast Kingdom in the east. This gradient is the product of a number of factors, with the physiographic features of the state playing a particularly important role historically and into the present day (see Figure 3). Lake Champlain, on the western border of the state was an important thoroughfare in the early days of settlement, and the flat arable land that bordered it also encouraged the formation of population centres (Albers 2000). These centres continue to be dominant, even as agriculture is replaced by residential use and the lake becomes an amenity rather than a critical medium for transport. Forming a barrier between the Champlain valley and much of the study area is the range of the Green Mountains, which is breached by two rivers flowing into the lake – the Lamoille flowing through the heart of the study area and the Winooski river to the south. The mountains and the river valleys have played defining roles in the history of the state and of the county. The highest point in the state, Mount Mansfield, is at the western edge of the Lamoille county town of Stowe. This mountain has become the centrepiece of one of the most well-known ski resorts in the Northeast, providing a fundamental economic anchor for the region. It is largely Stowe’s presence that makes employment in the accommodation and leisure sectors in Lamoille county higher than the state average (28% of total covered employment in Lamoille County versus 11% for the state, Vermont Labor Market Information, 2011).

From an entirely different perspective, the mountains have played an important role in the forestry sector since the return of the forest after the state was practically clear cut in the 19th century. North from Stowe along the spine of the Green Mountains, towns like Belvidere still have forested parcels that are in the thousands of acres and have been held by forestry firms for decades. These parcels can be seen in Figure 4, which shows parcel boundaries for the towns of
Belvidere (to the north) and Johnson (to the south) superimposed on a map of elevation. The extent to which subdivision, and as a consequence development, has been concentrated in the river valleys is evident here. This pattern can be confirmed with data showing land use and land cover, as shown for the study area in Figure 5. Comparing the land use map to the elevation map below, it is clear that the higher elevations have remained predominantly forested while the valleys between the mountains, particularly along rivers have been cleared for agriculture and development.

The extensive forests within the study area are also important for their ecological functions, including wildlife habitat. The state’s environmental organizations are placing a growing emphasis on the importance of forest habitat unbroken by features such as roads, power lines and residential development (Fidel, 2007). From this perspective the mountains of the region serve to sustain source populations for many organisms that don’t compete well in the mixed landscapes of more heavily settled areas. At the same time, low elevation ecosystems and organisms are not as well represented in conserved lands. Figure 6 shows that public lands in the study area lie primarily along the mountain ranges, the one significant exception being the recently created Green River Reservoir State Park. Given the high level of private land ownership in the region and in Vermont in general, substantial conservation effort has been directed at landowners themselves. Land trusts have played an important role in limiting development of lower elevation lands that public agencies have historically neglected, particularly in agricultural areas.

Finding ways to limit development is one of the central debates in land use governance in Vermont. Lamoille county differs from the rest of the state in a key respect that makes it well-suited to studying these debates – it is the second fastest growing of Vermont’s 14 counties. From 1990 to 2000, the population of Lamoille county grew by 17.7%, compared to a state-wide average of 8.2% (see Figure 7). The towns included in the study area that lie to the east of Lamoille county had rates of growth closer to the state average. Overall, the fast growth of this region may have the effect of exacerbating conflict over land use governance, whether because of conflicting visions of newcomers and locals or simply because of increased competition between different uses.
For the past half-century, the question of how best to respond to growth and development in the state has been one of the most contentious issues in state politics. In 1969, Republican governor Deane Davis, spurred to action by dismay at slipshod development in towns like Quechee, created the Gibb commission which formulated recommendations for what was to become Vermont’s landmark environmental legislation, Act 250. This was a “pioneering effort in state environmental legislation” (Clark, 1994; see also Sherman, 1991). In Act 250, the legislature with broad bipartisan support created a permitting system for large-scale development, evaluating it against 10 criteria to ensure that it doesn’t have undue impact. Though it is a state program, it is administered at the regional level by commissions made up of citizens who volunteer their time and are appointed by the governor. Sanford and Lapping (2004) argue that this has lent the act a grassroots legitimacy that has been a key to its political durability.

From the outset that legitimacy has been contested by some sectors, however, particularly business interests and property rights advocates. Resistance from these groups helped block passage of the final component envisioned by the drafters of the legislation. While the permitting framework was set up and continues today, the planning component succumbed before it could be fully realized. What particularly raised the ire of opponents was a state land use plan that would have enshrined a map of land uses for the state’s entire land base – what its detractors called state-wide zoning (Sanford and Stroud, 1997). Without the land use plan, Act 250 lost any capacity it might have had to function as planning legislation and became purely regulatory in scope (see Sherman, 1991, p 110; Clark, 1994, p. 435; also Broderick 2007 interview). Operating as a veto of development proposals, Act 250 takes an essentially reactive form. It provides no framework for identifying the best places for development and encouraging it in those locations (Clark, 1994; Bollens, 1992).

These perceived deficiencies led to the passage in 1988 of Act 200, Vermont’s Growth Management Act. The act provided a robust planning framework based on adoption of 32 goals (subsequently reduced to 17) that identified core resources to be protected and processes to be followed. It also sought to foster coordination among various levels and sectors of government. Part of this effort was pursued by empowering regional planning commissions (RPCs) and creating incentives for towns to have their plans approved by the RPCs. Act 200 also mandated that state agencies write plans and coordinate them with other agencies as well as regional and
municipal levels of government; this component effectively died by the mid-1990s when agencies stopped submitting plans, though they are technically still required to do so. These various efforts at coordination raised a significant public outcry at the time that the Act was passed, with much of the concern focused on loss of local control to the RPCs. Just over half of the towns in the state adopted resolutions at their annual town meetings in 1990 stating that they would not adopt “Act 200 plans” (Elmer, 2004). Despite this opposition, legislative efforts to weaken RPC authority were blocked, in two occasions by the veto of the governor. Over time, the furor has died down to the point where by 2003 the majority of towns (72%) had plans that were confirmed by the RPCs – including most that had passed resolutions against doing so in the previous decade.

These two laws form the governance backdrop against which much of the debate over land use in the state plays out. Over time, more finely calibrated efforts to achieve planning goals like clustered development have taken hold. Various bills have passed to encourage growth areas in and around already existing development. The trend over the years has been away from state-directed planning, as represented by Act 250’s never completed state land use plan, and towards designation of areas pursuant to local initiative, albeit with encouragement and incentives from higher levels of government. Still, of all the various pieces of legislation that address land use, the one that seems to be most in the public’s eye is Act 250. Supporters credit it with stemming the tide of development and keeping Vermont’s essential character largely intact. Detractors continue to press for regulatory reform to lighten the perceived burden on reasonable development.

The acrimony that has broken out in the state over the years at times such as the passage of key acts has a substantive basis in livelihood concerns. At the same time, these conflicts cannot be reduced to the spontaneous expression of conflicting material interests. E.P. Thompson begins his classic essay “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd” (1993) by refuting what he calls the spasmodic theory of rebellion. The concrete material interests of the crowd – for instance, the need for food in times of scarcity – are not a sufficient explanation for why and how people take governance into their own hands. People do not rebel because their stomachs are empty, Thompson argues, but because their sense of justice has been violated. I believe that it is important to understand how such a sense of justice arises. I see it as the product of discussions
and interactions between parents and children, teachers and students, citizens and representatives and a whole range of other pairings or groupings in the community. In short, people’s political actions are rooted in their culture, in the vision of the world that they develop in dialogue with one another. The political divisions that arise over Act 250 or Act 200 reflect deeper social and cultural divisions.

This dissertation asserts the importance of understanding the processes that create and reproduce social divisions in communities that on the surface appear to have little to do with land use issues (see Robbins, Meehan, Gosnell and Gilbertz, 2009). It seeks to add empirical evidence to theories of enrolment in political projects (e.g., Hall, 1988). Such an effort has to go beyond treatments of people as groups, classes or identity categories to see how socially positioned individuals negotiate the political forces pulling them in different directions. A careful consideration of the discourses in participants’ interviews allows a picture to emerge of how different normative stances interact, sometimes creating logically consistent chains, other times in considerable tension with each other.

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters apart from this introduction. Chapter Two is the theoretical jumping-off point for the analysis of material I gathered in my research. In it, I introduce the idea of the moral economy and the ground it broke for the study of the moral or normative outlooks of communities. Although the question of popular legitimacy that is at the centre of this scholarship has always resonated with me, I found it difficult to apply its theoretical perspectives to my case in contemporary Vermont. The chapter works through the theoretical framework of the moral economy literature, seeking to identify assumptions that hindered my application of the concepts. It then proposes conceptualizations that can supplement the classic moral economy theories to account for heterogeneity within social groups and classes. By challenging some of the assumptions of classic works in the moral economy tradition, I try to open up questions about the processes by which individuals adopt normative views and align with larger political projects.

The next chapter presents the methods used in the research for the dissertation, providing the background necessary for understanding how I address the theoretical issues from the previous chapter through the analysis of interviews and survey data. It describes the approach I used to
select a sample of 33 people for participation in the study, then outlines the interview process. It then describes the methodology employed in a survey with these same people to elicit a profile of their perspectives on land use governance.

Chapter Four builds in a final piece of the theoretical framework – the notion of cultural complexes – but does so in close conversation with the research material (in contrast with the more abstract considerations of Chapter Two). It investigates the key issue of social divisions within communities in Vermont, arguing that the apparent conflict between newcomers and long-time residents masks a deeper conflict that is fought over cultural differences. I outline five components of the cultural complexes in Vermont – residential status, political outlook, class, key practices, and social interactions. Together these five components distinguish two groups that regularly find themselves in conflict with one another. The concept of the cultural complex introduces a certain flexibility to the definition of the groups that better matches the grey areas that some people fall into in Vermont communities.

Chapter Five presents the results of the survey. By creating a statistical profile of each person’s perspectives on land use, I was able to identify two relatively distinct outlooks which I have labelled Green Governance and Government Scepticism. Most of the research participants are clearly associated with one view or the other. These outlooks give an indication of the main issues along which the community splits when land use governance comes up. They also provide a baseline against which to consider the perspectives of individual participants, so that their departures from the group averages are easier to perceive.

The following chapter works through several specific land use issues sequentially. While one aim is to provide a general background on each issue, the main focus of this chapter is to explore the normative perspectives that the research participants bring to the interpretation of these issues. The chapter is broken into sections addressing agriculture, forestry, residential development, hunting and recreation. It concludes with a section that considers the issue of governance more broadly. Through the various sections it becomes clear that although the rough distinction between Greens and Sceptics generally holds, individuals display substantial differences within these groups in response to a variety of concrete concerns.

Chapter Seven digs into these differences by recounting the perspectives of three individuals in more depth. In these accounts I try to paint a picture of the way that the participants strive to
reconcile the variety of normative stances that they each consider to have validity. What emerges is that most of the dominant stances in their interviews are accompanied by less apparent hedges or limitations. These submerged threads in their normative visions are, I suggest, potentially important points of engagement, places where the polarization that characterizes much of political life in the state and beyond could be broken down. This reflects what I believe is a key indeterminacy in the extent to which individuals in the general population can be said to be enrolled in political projects. The final chapter in the dissertation concludes by recounting the arguments of the previous chapters, assessing the evidence amassed for a cultural reading of land use conflict in Vermont, and proposing future directions for research on the topic.

I was inspired to conduct this research by the work that I did for my Master’s thesis. In that work, I traced the events that led to a major state-wide controversy over the purchase and management of a new Vermont Wildlife Management Area created from the Champion lands, a vast tract of forest in the Northeast Kingdom held by paper companies for generations (Young 2003). Talking with key players from both sides of the struggle, I was struck by the intransigence of many of their stances. Even more striking were the claims they made about what Vermonters thought about the issue. Myself, I found that I had sympathy for both sides and wondered if such a position weren’t more common than leaders from either side wanted to admit. Clearly both sides had vocal supporters, but I felt that the avenues for expression of more nuanced views were relatively limited. The desire to form a deeper understanding of the way residents of Vermont develop stances on such issues led me to the current research.

I was particularly sceptical of descriptions of the beliefs of “local Vermonters” and “flatlanders.” Like many in Vermont, I don’t fit easily into these standard categories that purportedly describe the social lay-out of Vermont communities. I grew up in Vermont and have family connections going back some time, but these “credentials” are hardly watertight. My grandparents started coming to Vermont from Connecticut during the World War II to buy “pasture trees” from farmers and sell them at their nursery as Christmas trees. That led them to buy land and start one of the state’s first Christmas tree farms in the 1940s. They bought a farmhouse and lived in
Vermont part time working on the farm and in Connecticut part time working at the nursery until they moved to Vermont full time in the 1960s.4

While I was in Vermont for my fieldwork, my partner and I lived with my grandmother in the old farmhouse. One day during that year, my grandmother took me to a graveyard in Peacham, Vermont where some of her ancestors several generations back are buried. Although that branch of her family subsequently moved to Massachusetts, that ancestry is significant to her. “Don’t let anyone tell you you’re not a Vermonter,” she admonished me during that graveyard visit. And yet my relationship to “Vermonterhood” has always been somewhat troubled. Although my older brother was born in Vermont, my parents were living in Ohio when I was born, depriving me of one of the necessary credentials for being a recognized Vermonter. Such credentials are not always sufficient, however, as my brother was told by the husband of his day-care provider: “Just because a cat has kittens in the oven don’t make them muffins” – that is, one’s birth place doesn’t change one’s essential character. It is commonly claimed that to be a Vermonter means having seven generations of ancestors from the state.

All this talk about where you were born, or where your multi-great grandparents were born never seemed to me to capture the divisions that I felt in public school. In some ways the aphorism about the kittens points to the fact that there’s something more intangible that makes you a Vermonter. Though at the time I wouldn’t have used the terms, I recognized that there are distinct cultures and a multitude of indicators that peg you as being from one culture or the other. More than my place of birth, my parents’ educational background is probably what set me apart as not a “Vermonter.” In particular, my father’s PhD in botany fostered in me an interest in nature and birds that was far from the what most of my classmates were concerned about. Conversely, his allergy to organized sports and engines left me with little experience (or interest) in areas that were common among the boys I was surrounded by. Different class backgrounds led to different practices and ultimately to strained or absent social interactions. This was only

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4 My Grandfather continued to buy land for more Christmas tree fields as his business prospered and surrounding farms struggled. He became a significant employer in our small town. Eventually the land became one of the biggest assets of his business and its sale as the business wound down supported my grandparents handsomely. These issues all complicate my family’s relationship to the community in Wolcott and to the place of land in livelihoods more generally.
exacerbated by being gay, which led me, like many other rural gay people before and since, to seek out urban environments where acceptance was more easily found.

Vermont was under my skin, though, and I kept coming back. As I got older I became more interested in challenging the preconceptions that I had accepted when I was younger. I found that outside of public school, people were more able to let their idiosyncrasies show, particularly in one-to-one interactions. I began to appreciate the spirit of independence that Vermonters claim. The people that I have gotten to know in the process of writing this dissertation impress me with their considerateness and their thoughtfulness, and I hope that I am able to convey these qualities in the pages that follow.
Figure 1: Study area in Vermont
Figure 2: Population of Vermont Towns, 2000

Legend
- Study Area

Number of Residents
- 0-585
- 586-1,049
- 1,050-1,457
- 1,458-3,224
- 3,225-39,842

Data Source: US Census

Figure 2: Population of Vermont Towns, 2000
Figure 3: Physiography of Vermont
Figure 4: Parcels and Elevation -- Belvidere and Johnson
Figure 5: Land Use/Cover and Elevation

Legend
Land Use/Cover
- Other (agriculture)
- Urban
- Forest
- Water

Legend
Elevation
Feet
- High: 4103
- Low: 404

Figure 5: Land Use/Cover and Elevation
Figure 6: Publicly Conserved Lands in Study Area
Figure 7: Vermont Population change by Town, 1990-2000

Legend
- Study Area
- Population Change, Quintiles
  - -19.8% - 2.1%
  - 2.2% - 7.8%
  - 7.9% - 13.4%
  - 13.5% - 21.2%
  - 21.3% - 94%
  - Outliers*

* Towns with high growth but populations less than 20

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

Figure 7: Vermont Population Change by Town, 1990-2000
Chapter 2: Moral economies

2.1 Introduction: Moral economy and the study of popular politics

This chapter introduces the concept of the moral economy and discusses some of the key texts in the scholarship devoted to that topic. Moral economies can be thought of as visions of how institutions or social arrangements that affect people’s livelihoods should be structured. A broad definition of the moral economy describes it as “embody[ing] norms and sentiments regarding the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to each other” (Sayer, 2000; p. 79). Many of the classic works in the field seek to identify a moral economy by looking at struggles that arise in specific situations when traditional norms are violated. The focus on norms appealed to me because it supplies a robust yet subtle approach to understanding political motivation, rather than relying on crude interest-based explanations. The concept of the moral economy makes room for culture in explanations, above all political culture.

Many of the institutions in Vermont that govern land use have profound effects on people’s livelihoods. As a result there is a great deal of debate over what form is most appropriate for these institutions – for instance, should revenue be raised from taxes on property and if so how should the rates be set? Should land in certain uses be exempt altogether from being taxed? Certain arguments are particularly prominent in these various debates. These can be laid out with little difficulty. A bigger challenge is to determine how these arguments circulate through the general population, where they find support and where they find resistance. The moral economy literature connects the arguments to specific social groups and classes. It describes the variations in political culture as the analytic focus moves between social groups and across class boundaries. This kind of work of locating arguments in a social context is what I aspire to do in the dissertation. For that reason, the moral economy scholarship is an excellent theoretical foundation for my analysis. At the same time, the limitations of the moral economy approach become evident as the close investigation of the empirical data proceeds. For one thing, the moral economy approach provides little guidance in how to make sense of the heterogeneity of
views that I turned up in my research. The assumption of homogeneity within a class or social
group is one of the issues I discuss in the chapter. A related limitation of the moral economy
scholarship is the relative lack of attention to how a moral economy develops historically, that is,
what the concrete processes were by which some people convinced others that a particular
normative stance was appropriate.

This chapter gives a detailed account of the key features of the moral economy approach,
including some of the assumptions that limit its utility for my purposes. I then set about
extending the theoretical framework by considering the specific processes that lead people to
adopt particular normative stances rather than others. This extension introduces the issue of
where people encounter normative stances and what kind of credibility they see those sources to
possess. The extension of the moral economy that I propose also considers beliefs people hold
about how the world works (beliefs that I call “causal models”) and posits pathways by which
those causal models circulate among people and social groups. By introducing these ideas, I am
more able to account for individual variations in belief within social groups and classes.

To counter the individualistic lens that these theoretical tools might impart, I also bring in the
notion of the political project. A political project is an effort with some degree of coherence
seeking to achieve particular political objectives. Political projects work to enrol support from
various constituencies within the polity. One way they do this is by offering narratives that align
with key normative stances within a constituency. If that effort at enrolment is successful, the
political project may be able to shift some of the stances that a person holds to further secure an
alignment of views. However, this dance is delicate, and I hope to convey that delicacy as I lay
these dynamics out towards the end of this chapter. A final piece of my argument rests on a
notion that I call the cultural complex, which I introduce in Chapter 4. In order to give it a
proper treatment I first need to describe how I collected the data on which the analysis is based.
This I do in the my chapter on methods – Chapter 3. The point of entry for all of this is the set of
questions raised by the moral economists starting as far back as the 1940s, and it is to those
questions that I now turn.

As an analytic concept, “moral economy” designates a set of beliefs or normative stances about
what economic actions are legitimate in particular circumstances. Growing out of work by Karl
Polanyi (1944) on embedded economies, it moved into broad circulation with the work of E. P. Thompson (1963, 1993 [1971]) and James C. Scott (1976). Since then scholars looking at the incorporation of traditional economies into the capitalist world system have made the most use of the concept, both in historical and contemporary settings. The notion of the moral economy has played an important role in contesting orthodox views on the place of markets and the economy in broader society.

One of the things that makes the moral economy literature an appropriate reference point for the research I undertook is the seriousness with which it approaches questions of context through engagement with empirical evidence from the historical archive or contemporary research. Research into the moral economy involves attending to what people actually believe, what actions they take and what justifications they offer for their actions. This stands in marked contrast to much contemporary writing about land use in both the legal and philosophical tradition (e.g., Freyfogle, 2007; Beatley, 1994; Caldwell and Schrader-Frechette, 1993). In these latter cases, the scholarly task is conceived normatively – to describe how people should engage with the land. The resultant debates are important, but without a clear picture of what people actually believe, they can be of limited value in understanding (or even in pursuing) environmental politics. Scott emphasizes the importance of empirical investigation to the theoretical objectives of his own project: “If the analytical goal of a theory of exploitation is to reveal something about the perceptions of the exploited—about their sense of exploitation, their notion of justice, their anger—it must begin not with an abstract normative standard but with the values of the real actors” (Scott, 1976, p. 160). While my focus is not so explicitly on exploitation, I take Scott’s insights as applicable to any investigation of popular politics, including my own concern with land use governance.

Another aspect of work in the moral economy tradition, tied to its empirical efforts, is the attention it devotes to the specificity of circumstances. One of the most salient aspects of the moral economy is that it specifies the circumstances under which one set of rules is superseded by another— for example, in the case of widespread hunger the rules of the market have no

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5 This is also a concern of that part of environmental ethics that is occupied with pragmatism, as opposed to monistic approaches that seek to settle on a universal ethics that applies to all situations (Minteer and Manning, 2002).
ethical force and the right to sustenance takes over (Thompson, 1993). A certain moral economy shaped by notions of subsistence and survival pardons “theft” of food in such circumstances. This attention to context is indispensable when the task at hand is investigating how people strike a balance between the livelihood needs of individuals and the needs of the land (and all the entities that it stands for). The livelihood circumstances of the landowner become an important factor for people as they try to decide what actions are permissible.

The focus on history and geography that is often a part of the study of moral economies is partly a recognition that the ethical views people bring to these questions are part of a long tradition. It is very easy to romanticize tradition, and that is not my intention. I certainly do not argue that European settlers’ traditional relations with the land were harmonious (though that view certainly exists in the community) – there are exhaustive accounts of New Englanders’ despoliation of the environment that they appropriated from Native Americans (Cronon, 1983; Judd, 1997).

However, it would be wrong to therefore imagine that there were no conservation impulses among landowners and land users in the past (also in Judd, 1997). In any community’s system of land governance there are threads that militate against the abuse of land, even if these threads are submerged and hard to discern in the institutions that take hold.

My point in highlighting these submerged threads is to argue that land use traditions are never wholly consistent or coherent (Kemmis, 1990, p. 68). This position puts me at odds with the general thrust of the founding moral economy literature, particularly Scott and Thompson. My argument in this chapter is that although there are certain patterns in the normative stances of communities, identifying a single moral economy for a class or community obscures more than it reveals. The process by which individuals arrive at a normative stance is important to consider; it isn’t automatically given by their position in society. The result is that individuals within communities may give voice to dominant discourses but they also may express sympathy with submerged threads.

Multiple discourses come together for the individual to sort through. When people talk about treatment of the land, they may give voice to these submerged threads even though their actions are ultimately dictated by other considerations. This is important because it’s too easy to judge people only on their actions and assume that they don’t care about the land and that those other threads aren’t present in their thinking. This can then lead to a position that our environmental
activism requires us to reform them wholesale – a patronizing attitude that cannot help but alienate the very people we are trying to convince. In many cases it may be more effective to try to understand the circumstances that lead a landowner to feel that a course of action is their only option and address those circumstances.

Despite the challenges I raise to moral economy scholarship in the course of this chapter, let me clearly state that I begin from a place of deep sympathy with its project and a clear recognition of the important issues that it has put on the table. The concept of moral economy recognizes the agency of individuals and communities. Approaches that consider moral economies provide a more fine-grained understanding of the achievement of political power than explanations that only consider the (“objective”) interests of different groups. They make fewer assumptions about what matters to people and how they arrive at a decision. They reject the notion of a universal subject possessing only rational economic motives which is at the heart of mainstream economic theory (and some variants of Marxism).

At the same time, the variety of moral economies is not an emphasis in either Thompson’s or Scott’s work. To a significant extent, both are focused on identifying a deeper, abstract principle that motivates political stances. Of the two, Scott carries this furthest, formulating his theory as a set of principles that with some slight adjustments applies to peasants the world over (pp. 3-4, 157). Thompson, by contrast, insists in all his work on the importance of historical and geographic specificity; it would be hard to imagine him making the kinds of claims that Scott does. Nevertheless, in his discussions of the specific contexts he studies, Thompson also has a tendency to depict the community as politically homogeneous and to leave aside the range of responses that inevitably arise in conflictual situations. He makes frequent use of the term “popular consensus” without ever addressing the question of how one would know that the popular classes as a whole stand behind the actions he describes. In part this reflects the fact that both Scott and Thompson operate on a larger scale than I do and are more comfortable with coarse-grained analyses of whole communities. I believe there is something to be gained from the fine-grained analysis of communities, attending to the complexities that manifest at the level of the individual but have implications for larger collective entities. Popular consensus is an important political phenomenon, but it is achieved through many small acts of negotiation that the classic moral economy literature fails to register.
In this dissertation I push the concept of moral economy to realize the potential that inheres in its attention to the actual beliefs of individuals in communities. Polanyi, Scott and Thompson launched an important re-evaluation of theories of ideology and motivation, making space for a more empirical approach that looks for evidence of what people actually believe. Aspects of their work still retain assumptions about the homogeneity of classes and communities but they laid important groundwork for the analysis of popular politics.

2.2 Moral Economies, Part I

2.2.1 The classics of moral economy

Karl Polanyi was an important critic of mainstream economic thought as well as a political theorist of remarkable breadth. Polanyi was also a key figure in the founding of the subdiscipline of economic anthropology. He provides a useful framework for the consideration of the relation of the economy to moral aspects of society. He argues that –

The outstanding discovery of recent historical and anthropological research is that man’s economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, his social assets. He values material goods only in so far as they serve this end. (Polanyi, 1944, p. 48).

Polanyi draws on anthropological accounts of societies that existed outside the western market system to paint a picture of a social order whose purpose is to maintain relationships among community members that ensure the common welfare of all. He describes central principles of reciprocity and redistribution that entail a carefully calibrated movement of goods among individuals in a society. The principal motive for participating in such systems is the reward of social recognition and status. Polanyi argues that this motive is so powerful that the idea of ignoring the system and seeking one’s own interest comes to be practically inconceivable, since it involves cutting oneself off from the source of both communal and individual life – the community (p. 48).

This anthropology is more than half a century old and it can be justly critiqued as idealized in many respects. However, the central point still holds: what we with our modern sensibilities take to be economic issues and hold separate from moral concerns were in other societies much more
integrated. His insights into the peculiarly Western concept of an autonomous entity called “the economy” are supported by subsequent scholarly work, particularly Foucault’s investigations of the rise of notions of population and economy in the course of a shift toward governmentality (Foucault, 1991).

Polanyi’s monograph builds on his distinction between different ways of conceiving of economic activity by recounting the rise of the idea of an autonomous market. The classical political economists such as Smith, Malthus and Ricardo formulated arguments about the necessity of freeing the market from all constraints and allowing the “natural” laws of the market to regulate it. Social norms regulating the market, such as those setting the price of staples or limiting who may buy and sell at markets, were to be abandoned. The result would be a sorting out, a social reorganization. Some would fall by the wayside but the greater good of the society would be ensured. One of the instruments identified to achieve such sorting out was hunger – it worked as an efficient goad to ensure that people shouldered their social responsibilities. This was a new vision of the relationship between society and the economy, one which reversed their priority. Instead of the economy being embedded in society such that all economic actions were evaluated to see if they accorded with social values, the economy moved into the central position and social values were evaluated to see if they hindered the free market.

One of Polanyi’s central insights is that an entirely free market is a utopian ideal that would bring unprecedented havoc to human society and the natural world. In the mid 19th century when the purest ideology of economic liberalism was at its peak, such a threat loomed large and society responded by protecting itself from the widespread effects of the unleashed market. Polanyi identifies scores of initiatives that set up bulwarks against the market’s effects, regulating a gamut of issues from labour to health and public safety to essential goods and services. Polanyi asserts that these initiatives together represent the spontaneous response of groups throughout society to the massive upheavals ushered in by the market. To this dynamic – the incursion of the market and the protective response of society – Polanyi gives the name “double movement.” He takes pains to argue that the response is not the doing of an anti-market conspiracy, but is the natural response of a society under threat, protecting what it holds dear (p. 151 ff.). As evidence he shows that countries throughout Europe in the widest variety of political circumstances enacted a nearly identical slate of laws as each experienced the incursion
of the market. The spontaneity of this protective response of the double movement is a characteristic that Polanyi submits can only be explained by the grievousness of the threat posed by the unregulated market. When the effects of the market began to become apparent, the instinct for self-preservation kicked in among those affected.

Polanyi cites the range of different laws enacted in the wake of the expansion of the market as evidence indicating which aspects of the public good the market threatened. The drive to secure a profit by any means can be discerned in laws prohibiting the adulteration of food, single-shafted coal mines and the employment of young children to sweep out narrow chimneys, to name just three examples. Without oversight of industrial and commercial practices, the drive to profit would bring to market harmful products made in dangerous working conditions. Both workers and consumers would suffer while capitalists would face no disciplinary action. To the extent that other workers stood waiting to take the place of those who succumbed, capitalists could “use up” this resource with impunity. The sale of unsafe or poor quality products could return to haunt a producer as reduced demand, but only if it was easy to trace the product back to him/her, which became more difficult as the scale of commercialization increased (see Cronon, 1991). Whatever one’s opinion of contemporary food and workplace safety regulations, Polanyi’s examples remind us of the nightmare a market with no such regulations at all would inevitably become. In part this is because the international market system allows people to operate on a scale that insulates them from social claims, allowing them to escape responsibility for their actions (Sayer, 2007). This contrasts with pre-market economies that operated on a much smaller scale, so that economic actors were also generally bound by social ties to the people they interacted with.6

Much of the legislation that Polanyi discusses was the initiative of politicians who were themselves advocates of economic liberalism but were convinced of the need to take steps to protect key aspects of their nation’s welfare (Polanyi, 1944, p. 153). This fact illustrates a key characteristic of the double movement: it can be conceived not only as a response occurring at the level of society but also within the deliberations of the individual. Given the destructive potential of the free market, people inside the market system often perceive the threats that it

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6 Incidentally, the problem of scale is not restricted to markets. It is just as much a problem for bureaucracies engaged in central planning, a fact Polanyi recognized (Baum, 1996).
poses to areas of life that they value. Even if they generally support the notion that the free market is the best way to organize the economic life of society, they often harbour some reservations stemming from their experience of these threats. In this sense, the double movement is not just a large scale historical trend, but also a dynamic that often occurs within the individual as he or she strives to balance economic dynamism with social protection. It is wholly possible for a person to subscribe to economic liberalism as an abstract theory but to make exceptions in practice. One interpretation of these exceptions is that they represent a lack of commitment to the abstraction of liberalism.\(^7\)

These tensions between abstract commitment and more grounded stances are the heart of my research. By investigating that commitment, my point isn’t to render a judgment or show people up as hypocrites. (If I’ve learned anything from this work it’s not only that being totally consistent is extremely difficult, but also that it has its own problems that can be worse than being inconsistent.) I’m actually interested in what issues are important enough to a person to make him or her depart from strongly held convictions. Although the valuing of these issues may not be easily articulated into an abstract theory, I see them as normative bases of equal importance as tidy principles.

Polanyi puts the conflict over economic regulation at the centre of his account of the societal transformations that wracked the world when he wrote the book in the early 1940s. He forces us to ask the question: what sort of oversight is appropriate for the economy? The answer to this question, he argues, cannot be “none.” An economy that is completely outside of social regulation is impossible to sustain. If that is the case, and I concur with Polanyi on that point, then we are faced with the question of what degree and mode of regulation are appropriate. My research doesn’t seek to answer this question but instead maps out the answers of my research participants.

I am interested in the phenomenon of people’s normative stances, and it is certainly possible for them to take a normative stance the effects of which would be disastrous if it ever were played out in the real world. One of the things Polanyi contributes to this research is a carefully worked

\(^7\) Ong (2006) argues persuasively that neoliberalism is actually constituted of exceptions such as these that work in the favour of powerful social groups. This has some resonance with Harvey’s (2005) account of neoliberalism as in essence a political project of the economic elite to secure their power and wealth.
out historical description of the ideology of the autonomous market. Using his framework (supplemented by others who have described this ideology using other terms, especially “neoliberalism”), I investigate what kind of purchase these ideas have in my study population. His idea of the double movement suggests that there is a limit to how far people will accept the bitter medicine that has been prescribed for them. I seek to see how people articulate those limits – the kinds of bounds they put on the freedom they are willing to give to the market.

The market has come to be accepted as a – if not the – primary tool for organizing economic activity in most of the world (Harvey, 2005). Although Polanyi describes societies where the market was carefully circumscribed to reduce its influence on day to day life, for most of us that is hard to imagine. The dominance of the market however cannot be taken to mean that it is the only institution governing economic life. The constraints that Polanyi describes as arising in the protective phase of the double movement stem from sets of beliefs that have crystallized as rights. Many rights have been legally codified, forming institutional protections against market excesses; examples include the laws cited above from Polanyi’s account as well as such foundational documents as constitutions and charters. But rights also have an existence in the popular imagination that may not match legal definitions. These mismatches can lead to popular actions where the public asserts its claims. Dramatic popular action of this type naturally enough caught the attention of many historians.

In his reframing of what had been characterized as food riots in 18th century England, E.P. Thompson made the important intervention of bringing to light the sense of violated rights that motivated these public actions. He categorically rejects the “spasmodic” explanation, which treats the unrest as a reflex-like response to hunger. Such an explanation fails to recognize that the crowd experienced hunger not only as a physical condition but as an injustice. The hunger that led to uprisings was a particularized hunger resulting from specific violations of traditional economic (and political) practices. And indeed the “rioters” might not even be hungry at the time of the riot; uprisings could take place in anticipation of hunger that people believed would result from the economic behaviour they saw occur.

Thompson’s investigation of these uprisings brings into relief the right of subsistence around which is constructed a well-developed “moral economy,” a notion that Thompson is credited
with bringing into contemporary scholarship. People objected to the loss of access to goods that came with the increase in long-distance trade. Farmers and traders sought to maximize their returns, which might involve selling goods to distant markets where the prices were better. Local populations felt they had a claim on local produce – a right to buy staples at a traditional rate – and that that right should not be affected by the opportunity to make more money by selling the produce elsewhere. People took action both to prevent the export of local produce and to “regulate” the prices of goods that were sold in local markets. There are many records of the supposed mob seizing goods from their owner, selling them at what they saw as a fair price and delivering the proceeds of the sale back to the owner. For Thompson these are important indicators that a well-developed code of justice undergirded these actions.

The contrast of the moral economy motivating the crowd with the ideology of the free market is stark. The market is purported to lead to an efficient distribution of goods, which in turn is described as contributing to public welfare. Efficiency here means goods generate the highest return, that is, they go to those with the greatest ability to pay. Such a definition ignores entirely the question of need – whether food goes to those who will starve without it. The moral economy’s insistence on the right to subsistence forces the question of need back onto the agenda, restricting the right of capital to pursue maximum returns. In Polanyi’s terms, it seeks to “re-embed” the market in the moral framework of society.

Thompson’s history touches down in “times of dearth” when scarcity of staples threatens the very lives of the poor and the poor take action. But the fact that these uprisings are noteworthy occurrences underlines the fact that in less extreme circumstances the market is left to operate more freely. People may object to long-distance trade and to higher prices but it often takes a looming crisis to raise a critical mass. At some point a line is crossed and the situation becomes intolerable for enough people to mount a popular response. This focus on extreme circumstances is an issue that I take up in more detail below.

While many factors go into determining whether people in a given situation acquiesce or revolt, the response cannot be understood without considering the moral framework they use to judge the situation. As James Scott argues, there can be no detonation without dynamite, and he devotes his book, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, to the description of the social dynamite that is the felt experience of exploitation. One of the reasons Scott puts the lived experience of
the peasant at the centre of his analysis is to counter the arrogance of analyses from both mainstream economics and Marxism that assess the condition of the peasantry without considering the peasants’ own opinions. Identifying levels of exploitation was particularly important to revolutionary Marxist theory because exploited populations were seen as fertile ground for rebellion. The problem was that the supposedly exploited peasants were not always interested in rebelling. The notorious Marxist explanation for this reluctance was false consciousness or mystification – the idea that peasants had accepted the explanations of their oppressors and weren’t able to see the fact of their own exploitation. Scott’s book is an effort, though not an entirely satisfying one, to provide an alternative explanation for peasants’ reluctance to rebel.

Scott points out that exploitation is a normative concept; it comments on the fairness or justice of the distribution of efforts and rewards (p. 158). Marxist definitions of exploitation relied on calculations, in particular the expropriation of surplus value (i.e., the value of a product above its costs of production, which is seen to be the product of the workers’ labour). Behind those calculations, however, is a normative stance privileging the expropriation of surplus value as the standard for measuring injustice. Scott argues that retaining surplus value may not in fact be the most important goal of the peasant and may not therefore be the basis for the peasant’s standard of justice. The primary move in Scott’s book is to redefine exploitation on the basis of norms indigenous to the community under study.

Given two alternative economic arrangements, the one that extracts less surplus value may not be better at providing what Scott argues is the peasant’s ultimate concern: security. Scott illustrates his argument by comparing the effects of a fixed rate tax on a peasant’s production to a tax system that appropriates everything produced above a certain level. Even when the latter system takes more produce, Scott argues that peasants prefer it because they know that their subsistence needs will always be met even in poor harvest years. By contrast, the fixed rate system turns poor harvests into catastrophes by taking away an unvarying amount from what is already a small pool of resources. From this perspective, peasants’ behaviour cannot be called irrational, backwards or the product of mystification. Instead it is the logical expression of the peasants’ subsistence ethic.
The subsistence ethic is one element of the moral economy of the peasant that Scott’s book lays out. The second element is reciprocity, which contributes to security but is also a value in its own right. Security isn’t just influenced by levels of taxation; social relations are key forms of insurance. The presence of a well-functioning network of kin, neighbours, friends and patrons often makes the crucial difference in times of crisis (pp. 26-8). These sources of assistance often depend on a balance between pledges offered by both sides, captured in the notion of reciprocity. Some of these relations may be between relative equals; when a peasant turns to a family member for help after a personal misfortune occurs, reciprocity places the expectation that the same assistance would be returned if that family member experiences such an event in the future. Other relations are between non-equals and involve the exchange of different goods or services; the classic example being a patron who offers protection in exchange for labour. In such situation of unequal power, the subordinate party develops opinions about whether the situation is legitimate or not. The issue of legitimacy is critical in Scott’s analysis, as discussed below.

The moral economy approach continues to be quite influential across a range of fields. Taking James Scott’s work as an example, a cited reference search (in Feb 2011) returned 1097 works citing The Moral Economy of the Peasant in the disciplines of development studies, anthropology, sociology, area studies, economics, history, political science and geography, among others. The fact that the year with the most citations (47) was 2009 gives an indication of the book’s continuing relevance (though the steadily increasing rates of publication complicate any firm conclusions we might draw).

Given its direct confrontation of orthodox economics and classical Marxism, it should be unsurprising that the approach has sparked debate. One response is that moral economies are reducible to rational, self-interested utility maximization after all, that beneath the apparent collective behaviour is a “unifying investment logic” (Arnold 2001 p. 87, citing Popkin 1979). This response is related to Booth’s (1994, p. 659) argument that the conception of the economic is too narrow in the moral economy scholarship – the absence of a market, or constraints placed on a market, cannot be taken to indicate that economic forces and calculations are also absent. He asserts that once the specific ends of the community or individual are identified, they approach those ends by making rational choices in which their own interests play a role. In this
argument, he performs the odd conflation of rational calculation in pursuit of individual self-interest with rational calculation in pursuit of collective interests. The point of the moral economy approach, in my reading of it, is not that rational calculation is an exclusive characteristic of market societies. Rather it is that such calculation is bent to ends that include the collective welfare of the community. Booth’s emphasis on rational calculation glosses over the point that it is the ends or goals that make a moral economy distinctive. These ends, such as the protection of everyone in the village from starvation, are the constraints in which the economy is embedded, putting limits on purely self-interested behaviour. That doesn’t mean that peasants or any other actors necessarily avoid rational or even calculating approaches to achieve their ends.

Booth sets out another critique of the moral economy scholarship. He argues that they overdraw the distinction between market (disembedded) economies and pre-market (embedded) ones.8 He makes the valuable point that all economies are embedded, in the sense that they all have visions of the good toward which their efforts are bent. Market economies hold as a primary good the freedom of individuals to engage in voluntary contractual relations with other individuals. This is not the only good they recognize however, so like any other society they must decide how to balance this good against conflicting ones. Booth offers this as a less tendentious comparison of market to non-market societies than that of the moral economists.

The recognition that market societies are motivated by a vision of the good is useful; they are too easily depicted as amoral. It is an unresolved question whether these societies and their visions are distinct enough to be figured as a fundamental break from other forms of social organization and distribution. I am persuaded that the changes that cascade down from making the right of free contract a primary social good are significant enough to justify the distinction the moral economists are making. At the same time, it is unquestionably valuable to recognize that there are continuities; a fundamental requirement remains for all economic systems whereby a range of social goods must be justified as the appropriate ends of economic behaviour, and, where they

8 As Block (2001) notes, we need to be careful using the term disembedded, recognizing that no economy can actually be fully disembedded and not self-destruct. Disembeddedness should be seen as a tendency or guiding principle.
conflict, a justifiable balance must be found. These justifications are the source of popular legitimacy; without them, the system must be maintained by other means.

These considerations provide a resolution to one of the problems identified by McCarthy (2002) in his discussion of First World political ecologies. He asks whether moral economies should be identified only in situations where market economies are pushing into previously non-market-based societies. Using the case of the Wise Use movement in the U.S. west, he shows that moral economies operated there despite the fact that capitalism has been the dominant economic system for at least a century and a half. The perspective on this question provided by Booth (and also found in Arnold, 2001; Sayer, 2000) is different from McCarthy’s. Although McCarthy does identify moral economies in contemporary capitalist societies, he reserves the term for those perspectives that are “explicitly oriented against the deepening of capitalist relations” (p. 1298).

One problem with this approach is that it imposes a filter that may have little significance for the people whose stances are the object of study. Even if it’s possible to unambiguously separate out pro-capitalist from anti-capitalist stances, a point about which I’m not convinced, in many cases this is not the logic that motivates the stances. To be clear, I’m not saying that the relation of a stance to larger capitalist political projects is unimportant, only that as a criterion for defining moral economies it risks obscuring important connections among the normative stances people adopt. An alternative formulation, which is in keeping with the direction some of the more recent literature on moral economies has gone (Arnold, 2001; Sayer, 2000; Ong, 2006), would consider any normative stance on broadly defined economic matters as part of a moral economy whether it is anti-capitalist or not.9 This definition allows a fuller consideration of the relations among normative stances and their articulation to larger political projects. It recognizes that stances can be multivalent, with potential to be articulated to different projects depending on circumstances.

The concluding paragraph of McCarthy’s article gestures toward an important aspect of normative stances in moral economies. McCarthy states that moral economies have “radical potential” because of their opposition to deepening capitalist relations. While I prefer a broader

9 What constitutes an economic matter is a subject of significant debate in the literature, with some arguing that the moral economy literature has too narrow a conception of the economic (Booth p. 659) or too broad (Granovetter 1985, cited in Arnold 2001, p. 87).
definition of moral economies, the concept of potential is still very useful. It recognizes that individual stances may initially be expressed in relation to one concrete situation but come to be articulated to larger political projects. So a stance against the sale of a parcel of federal land to the highest bidder can have radical potential in its rejection of privatization, but it can also have a “localist” potential when the predominant concern is the exclusion of outsiders. The idea of potential suggests that the original stance leads to the adoption of other stances aligned with a larger political project. How the potential is actualized as an articulation to a radical project or a localist project (or another project, or indeed to no project at all) becomes a question for further investigation. This process of articulation is theorized by Hall (1988) building on Gramsci. I make use of it below in the model I present for the adoption of norms.

Booth makes a critique of the moral economy scholarship that, while falling a bit wide of the mark, nevertheless raises some key issues. He argues that the scholarship’s implicit preference for embedded economies is founded on a romanticized notion of traditional societies that overlooks status hierarchies and the domination that these hierarchies depend on. The norms within which an economy is embedded, he argues, call on “each [to do] what is proper to his or her status” (p. 660). The market, as well as democracy, seeks to break these norms down, allowing people to act free of status requirements or constraints.

The charge that romanticism blinds moral economists to domination seems odd when one considers the strong focus of both Scott and Thompson’s work on subordinate classes and their resistance movements. It may be directed more toward the Polanyian idea of “society” within which the economy is embedded, a holistically imagined entity capable of defending itself in the second phase of the double movement. From this perspective, one might interpret Scott and Thompson’s work as describing resistance movements representing traditional “society” trying to block the installation of the market economy. But such an interpretation misses the class dimension already present in traditional society, which is central to the analysis in these two works. Before the market economy arose as a threat, the moral economy of the Southeast Asian peasants or of the English poor already existed as a set of claims on the elite that in effect limited their power of domination. The arrival of the market represented the erosion of these checks on
elite domination, though Booth is right to point out (as does Sayer 2000) that it also introduces new potential avenues of challenging domination.

While I suspect Booth’s depiction of traditional societies overemphasizes domination, I feel that the depictions of Scott and Thompson are not altogether accurate either. They portray traditional society as composed of discrete classes in tension or conflict with each other. Key to that depiction is that the normative perspectives of classes are essentially homogeneous. As a result, they are too uncritical in their acceptance that traditional norms protect the interests of individual members of the classes under study (and by “traditional norms” I don’t mean elite norms but those indigenous to the class itself, assuming these can be fully separated – an issue I discuss more fully below). This general point has been picked up by Arnold (2001) who argues that “phrases such as ‘shared moral universe’ (Scott, 1976, p. 167) and ‘shared way of life’ (Ramsay, 1996, p. 8) too often suppress rather than reveal the various sources of community legitimacy available at any one time; they inhibit a clearer understanding of why communities choose one set of legitimizing rules and principles over another” (p. 90).

In raising the question of the sources of legitimacy, Arnold is broaching what I think is the key question for the study of moral economies. We have to ask what gives a moral economy the legitimacy that it has. In order to do that, we have to be able to give a thick description of that legitimacy, which is something that most of the moral economy literature doesn’t do well. A thick description of a moral economy’s legitimacy entails describing the processes or logics by which people come to adopt a given perspective as their own. People in a given class do not subscribe to a moral economy simply based on their membership in that class. They engage in what Collier and Ong (2005) call reflexive practices (see also Linger, 2001). One component of such practices is reasoned consideration of self-interest. Other components relate to identity and social relationships. Mental models of how the world works also play a key role. All of these pieces and more come together as individuals decide whether to adopt stances and as those individual stances are translated into collective norms.

Implicit in all these discussions is the question of which set of norms, or which approach to settling on a set of norms, is best. In other words the scholarship itself has a normative component. Moral economists are advocating for a political order that subordinates the market
to society. Critics of the moral economy try to discredit the normative vision of the moral economists and argue for the superiority of the free market.

To some extent I take a position in these debates too, but I’m more agnostic on which is ultimately the right set of norms. I’m more committed to ideas about the right approach to settling on norms, which is to say, to process issues. Because of my interest in process, I feel a duty to peer into some of the black boxes that the moral economists have left unquestioned, the places where they skate over issues that warrant more consideration. One of the biggest is the formation of the supposed consensus across an entire class. It is to that issue that I now turn in a closer examination of James Scott’s work.

2.3 Moral economies, Part II

As noted in the first part of this chapter, James Scott’s *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* continues to be an important touchstone for work in geography, political ecology and a range of related disciplines. There are good reasons for this. It presents an appealing vision of resistance to domination and builds the case for assessing the legitimacy of political economic relations from the perspective of the people subjected to them. However, I contend that the model of political legitimacy that Scott employs is over-simplified in some crucial respects. In particular, his ultimate reliance on an “objective core” to the normative notion of exploitation in the end leads him away from his stated goal of listening to the assessments of the peasants. The next part of this chapter begins with an examination of Scott’s arguments and the assumptions on which they are based.

Scott claims that one can objectively, albeit “roughly,” assess whether an action or policy introducing change is exploitative. I contend that such an assessment depends on isolating that policy from a larger context, losing sight of the way contextual factors can have a decisive influence on whether an affected person views a change as based on a legitimate claim or an abuse of power. In order to discuss the way people employ contextual factors in their normative assessments, I turn to the notion of causal models, an extension of cognitive anthropology’s
schema theory (Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Causal models are individual or communal understandings of how different social or natural entities affect one another; they provide logical links between observed effects and purported causes. As I explore below, the understandings represented by causal models are at the heart of political subjects’ determination of the credibility of other political actors, which in turn is tied to the legitimacy of the policies and political systems that these actors advocate. With the reworking that I propose, the relationship between a given policy and the larger political system comes into view. A policy that introduces some hardships may be tolerated when belief in the larger system is strong, a possibility that Scott does not satisfactorily address in his model. Scott’s explanation for the toleration of hardships depends more on the calculation of risks, particularly the risk of repression, than on belief in a political project. By attending to questions of belief or “enrolment,” the connection can be drawn between individual normative stance and larger political projects. I use the example of neoliberalism as one such political project.

My work stands in an uneasy relation with the scholarship on neoliberalism. I accept the need to describe large scale processes that rework the forms of governance. I also accept that these processes are guided by distinctive logics or arguments. However, I feel that these studies have neglected an important scale of analysis, namely the individual. Ultimately, I argue, the articulation of normative stances to projects like neoliberalism is not straightforward. Empirical investigations of actual political stances can reveal that stances with the potential to support neoliberal policies may not actually be intended to do so and may not have neoliberal effects. The articulations are unsolidified and may therefore be more open-ended than we expect. This vision of open-ended, potential articulations is what undergirds the analysis of my research material in the following chapters of the dissertation. I trace normative stances and their relations to one another within the speech on individual participants, keeping an eye on larger political projects, but refusing to view these outlooks as simply reproducing a standard vision derived from a political project.

2.3.1 Scott’s fraught relationship with objectivity
Scott’s conception of the moral economy of the peasant rests on two foundations. One is the subsistence ethic – the idea that all members of a community have a right to subsistence and anything that interferes with that is unjust. The second is reciprocity – the idea that exchanges between two parties should be based in equal value. Scott defines exploitation as the peasant’s perception that either of these norms has been violated. By adding the concept of reciprocity to the subsistence ethic in his definition of exploitation, Scott makes the notion significantly more complex. This recognition of complexity is apt; the application of normative standards and the assessment of the legitimacy of social and economic relations really are complex issues. Unfortunately, Scott ultimately steps back from a recognition of the full complexity of a class of people collectively coming to agreement about what is just. This seems to be because he is unwilling to relinquish the analytic power that comes with a model comprised of a few easily described parts.

The kind of analytic power Scott seeks depends on the ability to unambiguously classify. In this case it involves being able to say what is exploitative and what isn’t. In order to achieve that clarity, Scott asserts that at the heart of peasants’ assessments of their situation is an “objective core” that allows peasants to recognize exploitation with no difficulty when they see it. This strongly implies that the peasantry as a class agrees about the nature of exploitation and on the identification of concrete instances of it. This assumption undergirds the entire book, from the title (“the moral economy of the peasant”) to the last page.

Scott displays a fraught relationship with objectivity. He rejects the deductive approach of the economists (Marxist and mainstream alike) which tries to install objective measures for assessing exploitation. Instead he says a theory of exploitation needs to look to the standards of the person whose condition is being assessed. This would seem to bring a certain subjectivity into the definition of exploitation. But then after surveying the literature on peasant rebellions and other responses to colonialism in Southeast Asia, he also invokes objectivity by formulating a set of standards by which an outside observer can objectively judge the degree of exploitation peasants face. My main objection is that he listens to the peasants only for long enough to determine what he thinks their fundamental commitments and concerns are. Once he’s identified those he reifies them into a moral economy which he says represents the perspectives of the entire peasantry. I believe that this closure is premature. The perspectives of individual peasants almost certainly
involve far more considerations than those that Scott highlights. And even those that he does highlight produce grey areas far larger than he admits.

The phenomenon that Scott is trying to explain – the consensus among the peasantry on the illegitimacy of the social order that is at the root of rebellion – is of great significance. However a theory that attributes identical norms to an entire class is not credible and misses the opportunity to consider the critical question of the processes by which consensus is built in classes or other social groups.

Scott’s search for an objective anchor for his argument and the lengths that he has to go to make that anchor hold come clearly into view in his discussion of reciprocity. As mentioned above one might consider two different types of reciprocity: between relative equals and between non-equals. It is the relations between non-equals that raise substantial difficulties for Scott’s theory of exploitation. Exchange relations between non-equals are particularly likely to involve goods or services of one type being exchanged for those of another type (e.g., grain for protection). Establishing what a fair rate of exchange is between the two types is a central problem for the moral economy. Orthodox economics, of course, leaves all this to the market with its laws of supply and demand, but the point of the moral economy scholarship is to assert that there are other standards of justice that people apply to these exchanges. A person may be in a commanding position with regard to some necessity; this monopoly power can allow them to demand extortionary prices from the community. The truly free market makes no comment on this situation, but the moral economy does. The difficulty for the moral economy scholarship is how to know what is considered a fair exchange and what is considered extortion. One can imagine that getting any group to settle on such a rate would take substantial discussion and persuasion; there would be a wide variety of individual ideas of what a fair rate is that would need to be brought into alignment. To avoid this mire of quarrels over calculations, Scott asserts that a rough estimate of where the line lies is both adequate and achievable.

Given the principle of reciprocity, I believe that it is possible to make at least a rough distinction between equal and unequal exchange and to associate unequal exchange with sentiments of exploitation. One would expect, in this context, that any major shift in the balance of exchange between peasants and landlords or between peasants and the state – any major shift, that is, in the ratio of goods and services peasants provide to elites and
the goods and services they receive in return – would be accompanied by a corresponding shift in the perceived legitimacy of the relationship. This criterion of judgment, it should be emphasized, is not merely an abstract standard by which an outside observer can ascertain whether exploitation exists; there is good reason to believe that it is a standard by which peasants themselves actually judge their relationships with others. The argument here follows the valuable insights of Barrington Moore and others who have demonstrated that popular conceptions of justice have a common objective core (Scott, 1976, p. 171).

The moves that Scott makes in this paragraph are important to highlight as they provide a good example of the aspects of his argument that are the subject of my critique. He asserts the possibility of distinguishing between equal and unequal exchange, despite the challenges raised by incommensurate goods and services. He hedges this somewhat by basing his claim only on “rough” distinctions, but it is clear that he sees these as a firm enough foundation for his theory. He locates this distinction not in the realm of abstract theory (elaborated by an outsider, whether an anthropologist or an activist), but within the heart of the peasant culture itself. In the process, he gathers the peasants together into a single entity that employs the standard consistently. Finally he gives that standard the characteristic of objectivity. The overall effect is to turn exploitation into a quality that can be assessed in a manner approaching calculation.¹⁰

It is worth taking a moment to consider what motivates Scott’s recourse to rough distinctions between equal and unequal trade. He is aware that asserting that the peasantry can agree on fair rates of exchange will raise objections based on evidence of the constant quibbling that characterizes market behaviour. He doesn’t want such small scale disagreements to obscure the fact that people can agree on gross violations of justice. He likely anticipates a relativist response that says everyone has a different notion of justice and therefore we can’t really label anything exploitation. I have real sympathy for these concerns. I recognize the need to make

¹⁰ A second passage conveys the calculative logic more even more clearly:

The concept of balance [of exchange between client and patron] employed here is not directly quantifiable. [...] Nevertheless, both the direction and approximate magnitude of a shift in the terms of trade can often be ascertained. Once the kinds of services and their frequency and volume have been specified in both directions, we have a rough picture of the existing pattern of exchange. If elites discontinue a service and the services of peasants remain unchanged, we know the balance has become less favorable for peasants. If elites demand more without providing more, we know that peasants are in a less advantageous position. (Scott, 1976, p. 172).
rough distinctions, to at least show that there is agreement about the grossest violations of justice and avoid the ethical abdication of extreme relativism. But I don’t think that it is necessary or desirable to bring in notions of objectivity to demonstrate this agreement. A bounded group of people can come to agreement, often because they share some fundamental values, but because exploitation is a normative concept, their judgment that a situation is exploitative is still a judgment. Any effort to render it objective disguises the normative aspect of the concept. If, in the course of determining whether a community sees a situation as exploitative, you say that the answer can be found from an objective examination of the evidence, you have no incentive to ask what the people in the community think. That contravenes the stated purpose of Scott’s work. 11

This way of thinking produces major blind spots in Scott’s theory. Where Scott doesn’t go is into a consideration of the formation of consensus in peasant communities. Thompson’s essay also suffers from neglect of this issue, despite the fact that his research is much more detailed. Both authors depict the moral economy as a cultural form that simply exists, rather than being something that is produced through debate and interaction. It is true that Thompson historicizes the moral economy by connecting it to rights recognized under previous regimes, but he still does not consider the range of perspectives on changing circumstances to be found within a social group or class, nor how that range of perspectives might be pulled together into a unitary moral economy. Scott for his part gestures toward the building of consensus without giving much consideration to the forces that might generate tension in the peasantry by pulling them away from rebellion. He discusses the appeals, urging and exhortation of the rebellion leaders and lays out the grievances that peasants had, but he doesn’t explain what attachments the leaders’ efforts were striving to overcome (149ff., 166). The picture that emerges from these two works is one-sided; from their descriptions it is hard to see how anyone in the subordinate classes could have any misgivings about rebellion, apart from fear for their own safety. As a result, little insight is gained about actual struggles to decide on a stance or action.

11 At the same time, I acknowledge that this whole question is raised by the difficulty of knowing when to move from the individual expressions of research subjects to a more general synthesis of what motivates them. Once you start identifying the concerns of the peasants as a group, it is easy to paper over outlying perspectives. But as soon as you start using “objective” to describe their views, that danger becomes nearly unavoidable.
It is worth remembering that both Scott and Thompson are writing about historical events and are forced to rely on archival evidence. These kinds of materials pose serious difficulties for the detailed analysis of the subjectivity of subaltern groups because these latter seldom left behind any writings or other direct transmissions of their views. Thompson in particular does an admirable job of ferreting out clues that reveal the thinking of the English poor, using for instance transcripts of court proceedings or reading between the lines of reports from outside the class. However, these methods cannot bring to view the complexity of an individual’s considerations, where different norms vie for expression. The danger that arises is when the lack of evidence translates into a theory that doesn’t leave room for the process of adopting normative stances. This danger becomes apparent retrospectively when attempts to apply the theory to present day situations are confounded by the actual complexity of people’s normative perspectives.

The formation of consensus becomes an important issue if the communities in question display heterogeneity in their views, in particular in their views about whether the way resources are distributed by the social order is fair. There are two main reasons why I am suspicious of the moral economists’ presumption that the class’ views are essentially homogeneous. First, within any class of people, individuals possess different amounts of resources. Some peasants may have larger savings, or have access to more extensive landholdings. Others may have more fertile land or have social connections that give them access to more credit. The combination of these resources means that some peasants are reasonably well-off and others are just scraping by, or indeed are in crisis. These differences in social position seem very likely to produce different views of the legitimacy of the social order. The second reason looks beyond structural factors affecting normative views. People’s responses to their situations vary in ways that aren’t reducible to their social position. Not all poor peasants are equally abhorrent of risk. Some may be convinced that the opportunities for improvement are attractive enough to warrant the risks run. Certainly the attraction of those opportunities and the tolerance of risk is likely to be greater for those with a bit of social insulation (safety net) or with fewer responsibilities. But some of this difference also derives from more subtle cultural factors, for instance a gendered “courage” that expects men to appear brave in the face of risk. And some differences may be even more particularized, stemming from individual experiences or personalities. Whatever reason predominates, these considerations make me sceptical of the assertion that peasants (or any other
class) view their situation through the same lens, using the same standards and arriving at the same conclusions about its legitimacy.

One of the reasons the formation of consensus can disappear from Scott and Thompson’s analyses is that the situations they look at are extreme enough that it’s easy to imagine that the whole community was outraged. For both authors, the moral economy is largely elaborated around the right to subsistence. They look at situations where people feel their continued survival to be at stake. Scott devotes the empirical chapters of his book to rebellions in Burma and Vietnam during the depression years of the 1930s. Such evidence accords well with the idea that there was a consensus about exploitation because of the trauma a vast swath of the peasants experienced.

Normative distinctions are made in all sorts of situations, not only in times of collective crisis. Scott explicitly excludes from his consideration all but the grossest shifts in the terms of exchange between peasants and others in society, where significant new demands were made with no compensation. He justifies this selective attention with the argument that “ambiguous shifts are not likely to tear society apart” (p. 173). In a sense, he may be right – ambiguous shifts are unlikely to motivate an entire class to rebel against the social order. On the other hand, ambiguous shifts may tear apart classes or social groups, as they struggle over what the appropriate interpretation of those shifts is. For this reason I believe that Scott’s dismissal of all but the crudest appraisals of social relations abandons very fertile ground for understanding the normative perspectives at the heart of a moral economy. Moral economies operate in the range of situations from the mundane to the catastrophic, and I would argue that there is much to be discovered about them in circumstances where differences of opinion can arise and be debated, as opposed to being overwhelmed by the enormity of events. From this perspective, Scott’s introduction of the standard of reciprocity usefully expands the range of the moral economy beyond pure crises of survival. Yet his next move is to trim back his consideration of reciprocity to only the most egregious examples of unequal exchange. A fuller consideration of reciprocity is warranted.

The most troubling implications of assumptions of class homogeneity and the deployment of a notion of objectivity for definitions of exploitation arise when one is confronted with individuals whose views don’t conform to what one would expect. Scott addresses this situation in the last
chapter of his book, asking whether the absence of revolt should be taken as a sign of repression or of mystification, i.e., whether peasants are quiescent because they fear reprisals or because they accept the standards of the elite. I don’t believe these are the only two options, or more accurately, that the acceptance of elite standards is necessarily mystification. Peasants may have valid reasons to judge that an apparently exploitative status quo is more just than what a critical outside observer would see it as being. They may see mitigating circumstances that the outsider doesn’t see or doesn’t acknowledge as mitigating. To call such perspectives the product of mystification is dismissive of the moral reasoning that peasants apply to their circumstances. 12

The reason Scott ends up in such an indefensible position is, I believe, his refusal to relinquish objectivity in his definition of exploitation. As long as there is an objective truth about who is exploited and who isn’t, those who don’t see that truth can only be mystified.

One of the frustrating things about Scott’s formulation is that there are passages where the possibilities of other interpretations come into view but are left unexplored. The last chapter of the book describes options peasants may have to supplement their incomes when their subsistence is threatened. The state, the wider economy, and other social institutions can mitigate some of the effects of increasing demands on peasant income. In reading about these options, one can start to see the different positions in peasant society based on the access individuals have to the various options described. However, Scott downplays the mitigating effects these options might have and so he doesn’t entertain the possibility that access to these options might introduce cleavages into peasant society and disrupt the unitary moral economy he

12 Scott’s use of the term mystification is slippery. On one hand, Scott’s work is largely elaborated as a critique of the notion of false consciousness, which deductive Marxist analyses use to explain why a class doesn’t perceive their situation in the same manner they do. However, Scott reintroduces the notion of mystification, at first in quotes (as in “what Marxists might call ‘mystification’” p. 227) but then without quotes. His main argument becomes that even though peasants may look as though they accept the values of the elite, there is a lot of evidence that they don’t, i.e., that they aren’t mystified. In making this argument, Scott repeatedly sets up the explanations for non-revolt as repression or mystification. The second to last paragraph of the book is particularly instructive in this regard. “The problem of whether peasants submit to exploitation because of mystification or because they have no other choice is, thus, not an analytical cul de sac. It can be resolved by asking how much coercion it takes to maintain the agrarian order and what happens when the balance of forces changes. It can be resolved by asking how common it is for peasants to circumvent the rules of tenancy or labor by petty violations that stop short of rebellion. Most important, it can be resolved by asking directly whether the values embodied in peasant culture do in fact accord with the dominant myths of the social order” (p. 240). What I want to emphasize here is that the resolution of the cases Scott invokes will determine either that the peasants rebel in their hearts against the dominant social order or that they accept it, in which case “mystification” is the applicable term. The only conclusion is that Scott’s objection to the concept of false consciousness is only partial.
has constructed. Most strikingly, after bringing to light the different positions possible in peasant society, he drops that line of analysis and devotes the final section of the chapter to his analysis of non-revolt, with his simplistic binary of mystification and repression.\(^\text{13}\)

It may be that Scott sets up this binary because he is mainly interested in building the case for the repression explanation for quiescence. As evidence that at the level of belief peasants frequently reject that which their behaviour suggests they accept, Scott produces a variety of exhibits from satirical songs to cases of rebellion that erupt when the elite’s capacity to repress is reduced. These help to build up a depiction of peasant culture harbouring a robust, autonomous moral economy that remains beyond the reach of elites (Agrawal, 2005). By no means am I denying that a culture of resistance often exists within the peasantry or any other subordinated group. What I am arguing is that peasants do not absorb and reproduce that culture automatically just by virtue of being peasants. By overemphasizing the power of the culture of resistance, Scott runs the risk of obscuring linkages and loyalties that cross the class boundary. Such relations are important factors affecting peasants’ perception of legitimacy and an account that ignores them is misleading and incomplete.

### 2.3.2 Causal models and credibility

One of the problems at the heart of Scott’s theory is that it oversimplifies the types of normative assessments of legitimacy that peasants undertake. Scott’s treatment of the moral economy emphasizes the rough identification of exploitation. If the peasants’ position in exchange relations deteriorates then Scott argues that their exploitation is increased; they are getting less and paying more. This definition of exploitation looks too much like arithmetic. It doesn’t take into account the way a demand made of a peasant fits into a larger context. The legitimacy of a demand depends in part on what makes it necessary, what its justification is, what causes it. Equally important is the question of the promises it makes about what will result from it, what

\(^{13}\) It is mildly reassuring that Scott at least formulates the competing hypotheses of mystification and repression as a question to be settled through empirical research, even if his choice of terminology suggests that one of those outcomes is unlikely to get a fair hearing from him.
effects it will deliver. These are not easily assessed. Claims, justifications and promises are common enough but the peasant has to decide which ones to believe. This requires a model of reality against which one can match the various claims to see how well they accord. A promise that paying a larger tax will result in greatly improved public benefits may be deemed a worthwhile investment or a pure swindle, depending on how one envisions the political processes that new source of revenue will engender. I am calling these views of reality, of how political processes unroll, “causal models.” Scott implicitly assumes that all peasants use the same causal model to assess the demands and claims made by the elite. I am arguing that the adoption of causal models is far more complex than that, depending crucially on the credibility of the potential sources for causal models. Not only can we not assume that all members of a given class uphold the same norms, we cannot assume that they have the same visions of how the world works. It is worth considering the processes that lead people to adopt both normative stances and causal models.

Without a causal model, purposive political action is impossible. The causal model is what posits that a given policy change will produce a desired effect. As such they are an essential part of any moral economy. But causality is notoriously difficult to establish. The occurrence of one event just prior to another may be coincidental rather than causal. With enough evidence of specific pathways by which one event gave rise to the other, a causal explanation can become convincing.

In many cases, concrete evidence to support a causal model is not available or, if it is, people may not be aware of it. However, the absence of evidence does not prevent people from developing causal models that posit the second event as the outcome of the first. Evidence then is only one factor affecting the explanation of events and the causal models the explanations support. People may have a detailed knowledge of one chain of events and generalize the resultant explanation to other chains of events about which they have much less knowledge. Social factors can also play an important role; the credibility a person accords to an expert affects

\[\text{See Strauss and Quinn, 1997.}\]
the likelihood of that person accepting the expert’s explanation, even if the expert offers no evidence to back up her claims.  

Credibility is a complex quality attached to political actors indicating the degree to which their perspectives can be accepted as valid. Ideally it depends on a demonstrated ability to accurately interpret significant events. However, the evaluation of accuracy itself demands a high degree of expertise or knowledge of the events, creating what feels like a circle with no point of entry for those that don’t have that knowledge. People needing to judge the credibility of a political actor who aren’t themselves knowledgeable on the relevant issues look to other signs of credibility. Credentials are meant to serve such a purpose, though as will be seen in subsequent chapters, credentials can actually undermine credibility in communities who feel that experts are in the pockets of special interests. Social characteristics can operate alongside credentials or take their place altogether as indicators of credibility. People’s evaluation of political actors may have a strongly emotional component, whereby their responses come “from the gut.” Such evaluations may assess different social characteristics at a subconscious level but be experienced as a generalized feeling or emotion that in turn leads to trust or suspicion.

Credibility within a given constituency is often tied to whether a political actor has the interests of that constituency at heart. People are aware that events can be interpreted in a number of ways and can be “spun” so as to support a political agenda and the interests of its supporters. The causal models and explanations of those with a demonstrated commitment to the constituency are more likely to be adopted there. In this sense, credibility involves vigilantly watching for and combating interpretations unfavourable to the constituency. Obviously this aspect of credibility is in considerable tension with accuracy. Credibility has to balance loyalty to particular interests with commitment to a more abstract conception of truth or fairness. Different people put more emphasis on one side of the balance or the other, which is one of the things that can introduce splits within a community.

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15 My understanding of these issues is heavily indebted to Science and Technology Studies, particularly Latour’s *Pandora’s Hope* and *We Have Never Been Modern*.  
16 The classic study of efforts to project and read credibility is Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1959).  
17 Iris Marion Young (1990) argues that conceptions of political deliberation have relied too heavily on rationality and makes the case for a serious consideration of emotion and other modalities of thought.
Future-oriented arguments highlight the fact that credibility involves not only the accurate interpretation of present events, but also the accurate prediction of future outcomes. Since that accuracy cannot by definition be determined in the present moment, this highlights another area where a peasant’s assessment of a policy cannot be objective but instead reflects the faith he or she puts in the predictions and their predictor. Constituents have to make probability or risk calculations when determining where to put their loyalty (Beck, 1999).

One of Scott’s main arguments is that peasants are risk averse and seek security above all else (“security-first”). Scott downplays the fact that the degree of risk individuals are willing to assume varies but perhaps more importantly that assessments of risk also vary. Risk assessments cannot be made without a causal model of the political and biophysical processes that produce the feared or desired outcome. These models are complex and subject to debate, making implausible the idea that a whole class of people accepts the same model, assesses risk identically and adopts the same stance on a given policy initiative.

The dispersion of causal models across a population, I am arguing, is not straightforward. People are predisposed to accept certain explanations by the experiences they have had and the social groups they are a part of. In part these factors operate by shaping people’s relationships to various authorities (in the sense of knowledgeable figures) and the credibility they see these people to have. One of the things that makes the moral economy scholarship compelling is that it recognizes that members of a class or social group share a predisposition to adopt similar normative views, however it doesn’t inquire into the causal models undergirding the normative views nor into the factors influencing the predisposition to adopt either norms or models.

The processes that lead to the adoption of causal models are related to those that lead to the adoption of normative stances. In both cases social factors play a significant role. At the same time, who counts as an authority may differ substantially in the two sets of processes: where a scientist may be treated as an authority on causal models, a religious leader may be similarly

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18 I use the word “downplays” advisedly. Scott does acknowledge that different peasants will have different orientations toward risk (see p. 25). Indeed the sensitivity to circumstances that Scott shows in this passage and the rest of the chapter are impressive. However, these are the sorts of differences that disappear from Scott’s analysis later as he develops a more abstract theory of exploitation and bases the moral economy of the peasant on the objective assessment of exploitation.
treated with regard to norms. However, a person may vest authority in many other types of people who don’t fall into these ideal roles, and in these cases the adoption of causal models and normative stances may be subject to similar influences.

The point is that a political subject is surrounded by people modeling different perspectives and must make choices about which perspectives to fashion her own out of. The choices she makes are not only influenced by her social relations, they also have an impact back on her social relations. The stances she adopts are to some extent read by others as expressions of her belonging to a community or subgroup within that community,19 which exerts a certain pressure to conform and is an important part of an explanation for the patterned distribution of norms and causal models within communities. However, the political subject in question is unlikely to only encounter authorities (or people on whom she models her norms and models) from her own social group or class. Except in the most deeply divided communities, people regularly develop respect and trust for some members of other groups/classes, and give their normative stances some consideration. This would result in a certain degree of mixing between the norms and models of the two groups, undermining any homogenizing tendencies in the group.

2.3.3 Hegemony: maintaining consent by balancing policies

The point of these considerations is to better understand what happens when people judge a policy or a state of affairs to be exploitative. By introducing the notion of causal models, I am seeking to provide a more convincing account of how people understand what the causes and effects of different policies and other political actions are. One of the key points that needs to be added to this account is that various political actions are all viewed in relation to one another; people do not assess policies in isolation but rather according to how they fit into the larger

19 Nancy Fraser (1992) describes discursive arenas protected from dominant society, giving them the name “subaltern counterpublics.” The existence of such counterpublics can lead toward perspectives that are more sharply distinguished from the mainstream than would otherwise be the case. What Fraser adds to a moral economy view of such arenas is a recognition that they are sites where collective identities are negotiated and contested. The moral economy approach focuses almost exclusively on the confrontation between the counterpublic and the mainstream, rather than looking at the inside of the counterpublic.
political context. In other words, a person may tolerate a policy that disadvantages him in some way if he sees it as part of a larger political project that will increase his well-being overall.

The analysis that I am proposing stands in contrast to the way Scott depicts peasants’ assessment of the policies that affect their conditions. He argues that peasants have no difficulty determining what policies increase their exploitation and what policies reduce it; their moral economy essentially prescribes their stance. Even if one could unambiguously determine the effects of a given policy (which is frequently not possible), Scott’s approach neglects the role the policy plays in the larger political project. Peasants may have enough trust in a political actor to accept a policy change she initiates despite the hardships that it ushers in. That trust depends on an explanation that can convince the peasants of the necessity of the change. The explanation in turn depends on causal models of both the political landscape and the biophysical world; in essence there has to be a shared vision of “how things work.” If that shared vision doesn’t exist, then the political actor has to work to establish it. These political processes of building and maintaining credibility are a neglected issue in Scott’s book.

Convincing explanations are a potent tool for gaining political power. They build political support because people want to be represented by politicians who understand their situation. A political actor is embraced when he or she can make sense of people’s experience.20 Once power is gained, maintaining it requires political figures to take action that cements the support that initially derived from the politician’s explanations and causal models. The actions of politicians don’t speak unequivocally however; constituents continue to draw on causal models as they interpret a politician’s actions, looking for motives and identifying effects.

In their efforts to maintain power, politicians are involved in a game of balance where they consider the current level of support of a constituency against the effects of a policy, calculating whether they can afford to introduce a policy detrimental to one group of supporters in order to bring in or cement the support of another group. Gramsci (1971) has described these political dynamics as a state of hegemony, where policies seek legitimacy by securing some degree of consent from the governed rather than being simply imposed. The room-to-manoeuvre that

20 Such a person might be considered an “organic intellectual” in Gramsci’s (1971) formulation if he or she emerges from the constituency itself.
credibility creates has been described as political capital (both by Bourdieu and George Bush\textsuperscript{21}). The decision to pursue any given policy is embedded in this larger political calculus. Another way of putting this is that political actions take place in a relational field where the presence of each action affects all the others. It is this deep interconnection that makes it difficult to reduce the motivating factors of a policy to a single cause that can then be assessed to see if it is justifiable or not (i.e., are demands motivated by greed or by more justifiable requirements?).

The choice to raise taxes is a clear example, since the aspect of balance is so evident in it. Raising taxes provides more money for the government’s budget which can be directed to specific constituencies (including the political elite themselves). Politicians have to calculate whether the hardship imposed on taxpayers will alienate them enough to lose their support (assuming they ever had it) and whether any losses on that side are balanced by gains among those who benefit from the expanded services. Of course, the tax burden itself can be shifted among various constituencies according to where political support is the strongest and whether changes in the tax code are conceived as a reward for political support or as a necessary source of revenue. A more specific example might be President Obama’s reluctance to push for gay marriage because he knew that there was little danger of losing the gay vote but substantial danger of losing more socially conservative centrist voters (Savage and Stolberg, 2010).

The point is that an assessment of a policy in isolation – determining its effect on a constituency’s well-being – tells us little about whether a constituency accepts that policy as legitimate or rejects it as exploitative. As I argued above, the interpretation of the effects of the policy is itself contestable, since different causal models will produce different readings of the events. What I want to emphasize here is that whatever the effects of the policy, it takes its place within a larger political project which may make it more palatable. A policy may be judged to have a negative effect on a constituency but to be balanced by other policies that have a positive effect. Some constituents may focus only on the negative effects of the policy while others take a broader view and accept it as a necessary evil in order to make larger positive changes (often in

\textsuperscript{21} “I earned capital in the campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it” Bush 2004 (cited in Brown, 2006). Bourdieu elaborates a theory based on a number of different capitals within different fields (economic, cultural and symbolic – political capital being one kind of symbolic capital). Political capital is earned by convincing people to put belief in you, and politicians are faced with the unceasing work of accumulating credit and avoiding discredit (Bourdieu, 1981).
the language of inevitability, or sometimes with a more positive angle: “an investment in the future”). Those adopting the second perspective see the policy as part of a larger political project and put their faith in the long term success of that project. In this way, the scope of a constituent’s thinking can have a profound effect on his or her assessment of a policy.

Gramsci’s notion of hegemony recognizes that different constituencies have different degrees of power and that the consent of a powerful constituency is more critical for a political actor to secure than that of a less powerful one. Constituencies without power can have policies imposed on them with no concern for the effects or how they will respond. In such cases, Scott’s model comes closer to working because policies don’t have to be balanced, they aren’t tightly linked in to a political calculation designed to maintain support. But as soon as a constituency starts to have some power – including the moral power to publicly shame their governors for the effects of their policies – the policy-makers have to start balancing policies against each other in an effort to prevent the refusal of the governed constituency. At that point, it is no longer possible to assess a policy in isolation. All the mitigating efforts, or “safety valves” (see Scott’s dismissive treatment of the latter pp. 208-210), have to be included in the assessment. This makes the sort of rough calculations of exploitation Scott proposes a much less credible academic undertaking.

Rather than judging policies purely on a case by case basis, people commonly ally themselves to a political actor (whether an individual or a party) and take their lead from the actor. This is not unthinking obeisance; as I described above, some policies may call the credibility of the actor into question and lead constituents to break away. But we cannot ignore this political dynamic that pulls people in and seeks to convince them to stick with the party through the difficult times in order to get the payoff down the road. These kinds of political dynamics are the subject of Stuart Hall’s compelling analysis of the rise of Thatcherism in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and ’80s (Hall, 1988).

The questions Hall raises have had a substantial role in inspiring my own conception of the formation of collective normative stances. He seeks to understand how a political project such as Thatcherism (one of the foundational variants of neoliberalism) could make such inroads in the British working class, whose interests were assumed to be essentially at odds with those of Thatcher and her supporters. His response to this conundrum begins by recognizing the
contradictory interests pulling any social collectivity in different directions simultaneously. He then looks at the way Thatcherism, or any other political project, highlights certain interests and downplays others by providing particular narratives of the reality that people are facing (similar to what I am calling causal models). In the process of narrating reality, these political projects valorize certain subject positions (such as “concerned patriot,” “respectable housewife” and “native Briton” – see p. 49) and seek to define what it takes to be such a person.

This analysis adds the issue of identity to the question of what explains the stances people adopt vis-à-vis a given policy. The way Hall mobilizes identity as an explanation is admirably subtle, avoiding crudely essentialist versions that assign attributes to anyone falling on one side of a chosen social boundary. Instead he sees identity as arising in part from the operations of these political projects as they interpellate or call forth certain kinds of subjects. As with normative visions and causal models, individuals respond to these interpellations by assessing the credibility of the political actors calling on them. There is always the possibility that such a call will fail, that those who are its targets will see it as a transparent attempt at manipulation and will reject it.  

I have introduced a number of considerations to contest the too quick attribution of a normative vision to an individual based on his or her class membership. To understand people’s normative visions, you have to know how they decide what is possible in real-world circumstances. They may be prepared to accept a change in policy that doesn’t seem to be in their interests because they assess it in a larger context. The extent to which an individual looks past the immediate effects of a policy varies. There will be people with knee-jerk reactions who reject all impositions that in any way increase the burdens they carry. The majority of people, however, recognize the political reality that trade-offs and compromises are sometimes necessary to achieve political goals that further their interests. Furthermore, people don’t only assess policies from the perspective of their own interests; one component of assessment proceeds from more abstract notions of justice or fairness that may sometimes mean assuming the burden of

22 This has resonances with the notion of performativity elaborated by Judith Butler (1990). See also Sedgwick and Parker (1995) for a clear example of how social situations forge identities by calling on people to position themselves.
providing for others. Everyone I spoke to in my research acknowledged some duties and responsibilities to the greater society. This means that a description of a moral economy has to go beyond the determination of whether a policy improves or degrades the condition of the person assessing it. It has to consider both the understanding of the way the policy fits into the larger political environment and the network of rights and responsibilities that the person sees her- or himself to be embedded in.23

### 2.3.4 Political projects and neoliberalism

Just as people do not generally assess policies in isolation from a larger political context, they seldom adopt normative stances in isolation from a larger normative context. Norms are often linked together such that one implies another. They may draw on each other as justifications or one may suggest another as the appropriate outcome or corollary of the first. For example, the norm that individual landowners should act as stewards to their property is often linked to the norm that the state should not interfere with a landowner’s land use decisions. The specific set of norms and the links between them are defining features of political outlooks. Normative logics are on display in the exhortations of politicians appealing to one set of values and trying to translate that into support for favoured policies.

These linkages may be governed by larger political projects that articulate each norm in relation to others and in relation to overarching objectives of the project itself (with the objectives themselves being a set of guiding norms). These articulations are what give individual stances broader political significance – the rejection of a local effort to introduce land use zoning can be articulated to a larger political position calling for a reduction in government oversight.

However, I will argue that these articulations cannot be assumed. It is important to investigate

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23 The moral economy literature examines some of these rights and responsibilities in great detail, e.g., the right to subsistence. But as I pointed out earlier, while in extreme situations these rights may become paramount, in more everyday situations other rights and responsibilities come into play and have to be balanced against each other. The dynamics of this field of rights and responsibilities needs to be described if the moral economy is to be a useful concept outside of famines or other catastrophes. Pragmatist and pluralist philosophy has explored questions of how different norms or responsibilities are prioritized in different contexts (Stone, 2002[1988]; Minteer and Manning, 2002)
empirically what linkages individuals make between different normative stances in order to develop an accurate picture of popular support for various political projects.

Any effort to systematically characterize the political environment is challenging to say the least; discerning a coherence in political projects is particularly so. Political initiatives with varying ranges of ambition abound. They are not independent from each other, but in many cases they aren’t clearly integrated into a coherent project either. A number of different tendencies have been identified and form the basis for much of the analysis of the political realm, including neoliberalism, neoconservatism, communitarianism, localism, Keynesianism/Fordism, corporatism, statism, socialism (Lockwood and Davidson, 2010; Brown, 2006; Kemmis, 1990; Jessop 2002). These “tendencies” have been depicted as projects with varying degrees of coherence depending on the author. Those that highlight the fractures and internal tensions within the tendencies and their promiscuous combinations have the most relevance to the arguments that I am making (Hall, 1988; Brown, 2006; and to some extent Jessop, 2002). Of the tendencies that appear in the literature, neoliberalism24 has attracted by far the most scholarly attention in recent years, which is unsurprising given the seismic transformations in the political landscape that are collected under its sign.

At the centre of neoliberalism is the assertion that economic development is best assured by establishing “open, competitive and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002, p. 350).25 As such, it has strong continuities with classical liberalism, though Brown (2006) points out that neoliberalism is distinguished by its view of free markets and associated features as normative objectives for government rather than natural features of the economy. The economic vision that Polanyi was writing against in the 1940s was the incipient neoliberalism that was being theorized by Hayek and von Mises.

24 The term “neoliberalism” can be confusing in a U.S. context where conservatism and liberalism are commonly used as short hand for right and left. Neoliberalism draws primarily on free market doctrines of classical economic liberalism (from the likes of Adam Smith and David Ricardo) which in the United States is particularly associated with “conservatism.” Political liberalism is based on notions of individual equality in political matters. There are both ties and tensions between the two strands of liberalism (Brown, 2006).

25 Heynen et al. (2007) broaden the definition somewhat by specifying a wider range of economic behaviour and social constraints. For them neoliberalism is “an economic and political philosophy that questions, and in some versions entirely rejects, government interventions in the market and people’s relationships to the economy, and eschews social and collective controls over the behavior and practices of firms, the movement of capital, and the regulation of socio-economic relationships” (p. 3). See also McCarthy (2006).
As with the other modes of governance, neoliberalism isn’t easily pinned down. Many different political initiatives are identified by various scholars as being neoliberal. For instance, neoliberalism might be seen in state initiatives that maintain an environment conducive to trade – e.g., urban renewal projects or military protection of corporate interests from other claimants (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). These active state initiatives blur the bright line between state-led government and market-led governance typically associated with neoliberalism (Gough, 2002; Harvey, 2005). Such complexities have led to theorizations of neoliberalism as hybrid or variegated, incorporating aspects of the governance mode that it seeks to displace (Larner, 2003; Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010).

McCarthy (2005a) relates hybridization to Tickell and Peck’s rollout phase of neoliberalism, saying that the emphasis shifts from denouncing the state to reconstructing the state in ways that privilege the private sector. Examples include public-private partnerships (PPPs), which can take forms like the community forestry initiatives that McCarthy examines. The fact that one aspect of these initiatives (the PPP form) fits easily into a model of neoliberalism doesn’t negate the fact that discourses and practices from other modes of governance also appear. Particularly problematic are invocations and uses of notions like community, which some have argued are an important point for the application of neoliberal power (Rose, 1999), but which are also central to communitarian and radical democratic modes of governance (see Amit, 2002, also Ferguson, 2010).

Different strands of scholarship focus on different aspects of the political phenomena where neoliberalism is said to be manifest. Many treat neoliberalism as a project or program of governance. The focus is on policies and initiatives that bring market logic into more and more areas of human and other biophysical life, replacing a regulatory logic that concentrates power in the state. Some treatments of neoliberalism as a project emphasize the interests that benefit from it, arguing that it is essentially a means of reinvigorating capital accumulation in the hands of the global economic elite (Harvey, 2005). The scale of the project-oriented analyses is generally quite large, national if not global. Even when the scale is smaller, such as with specific political initiatives affecting a more limited locality such as cities or city-regions, the focus is primarily on the policies and their repercussions (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).
A different analytic approach draws on the concept of governmentality and foregrounds rationalities of governance rather than specific policies (Foucault 1991; Rose, 1999; Agrawal, 2005). By rationalities, these authors mean characteristic logical or ethical discourses that structure thought, debate and policy. These discourses can appear in a wide range of contexts, so this approach can become quite abstract or general. But at the same time, it also stresses the role played by contingency and the specificity of historical context in producing unique configurations of governance (see for example Ong and Collier 2005).

These approaches are not mutually exclusive; they describe the same phenomena from different perspectives. The political projects at the centre of the first approach are identified partly by the logic that is the focus of the second approach, though in the former case more emphasis is placed on the interests involved and political circumstances that allow the project to advance.

My research addresses issues of concern to this scholarship, in particular the question of how certain political projects are able to achieve hegemony. However, I approach the question from a different direction. My primary interest is the role of popular support. I fully recognize that the macro-processes that lead to new governance forms draw just as heavily on other sources of power besides popular support (i.e., corporate lobbying, backroom dealing etc.). At the same time, popular support plays a unique legitimizing role that is indispensible in countries styling themselves as democracies, and arguably even in countries that don’t.

Some of the analyses that focus on the effects of neoliberalism go further than others in figuring the agents of neoliberalization as shadowy impersonal forces, or as representatives of powerful institutions and classes (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). There is very little sense that its spread is the product of concrete political choices made by individuals. When agents are identified, they take the form of vaguely defined “blocs” or “alliances.” Even in accounts that are much more sensitive to the role that public pressure can play in governance transformations (Gough, 2002), there is room for a fuller consideration of the composition of these blocs – how they coalesce from individuals. Without attending to the political agency of individuals it becomes very difficult to account for the role of the public in processes that rework governance forms. Popular support involves individuals making concrete choices between political options based on their normative outlook. In saying that this aspect of politics is important, I have no illusions about living in some ideal-type democracy where every individual’s perspective is equally respected.
My approach has some points in common with the governmentality school. Work in this mould pays particular attention to normative logics similar to what I sought to uncover with my interviews. Rose (1999), for instance, describes the emphasis on accountability that typifies neoliberalism. He traces this imperative through different policy environments, including the privatization of services formerly the province of the bureaucracy, and the “responsibilization” of clients of government services such as welfare. The analysis of these linkages is the forte of this scholarship. It provides convincing accounts of the logical implications of normative stances, how one can be constructed as leading inevitably to the another. However, it tends to follow Foucault’s lead in its analytic style: the focus is on discourses, their manifestations and their circulation through government and social bodies, abstracted from the actual convictions of people acting in concrete political environments.

Some work has carried governmentality approaches to empirical research with individuals. Agrawal (2005) sets up high expectations with his book *Environmentality*, but his exploration of individual subjectification processes relies on relatively thin survey data. Haggerty (2007) has a very interesting governmentality-inspired account of one woman’s political formation in the crucible of environmental conflict. While her project differs from my own in its focus on a single person who plays a key role in a conservation organization, I see it as complementary and motivated by similar concerns.

### 2.3.5 Potentials and pluripotence

I bring neoliberalism into my discussion of normative stances in recognition that these stances are often connected to larger political projects and movements. At the same time, what I hope becomes evident through my work is the complexity of the process of political articulation and of the relationships within the web of normative stances visible in the public realm.

Many of the discourses that scholars have associated with neoliberalism are normative in nature (e.g., people should be more responsible for their own well-being; people shouldn’t rely on handouts from the government; economic activity/ land use is over-regulated etc.) However, it is important to be cautious in attributing neoliberal motives to normative stances that people express in interviews. The connections between individual normative stances and larger political
projects are contingent and often surprising. In fact, sometimes the most important fact is that the connections are absent, or at least that the interview participant isn’t making them. In other words, normative stances do not translate predictably into political positions or actions.

To achieve objectives of extending the market model across areas of governance previously organized by other logics, the neoliberal project (admittedly a massive abstraction) articulates itself to many other arguments which by themselves don’t automatically lead to the conclusion that the solution is more markets. In a description of neoliberal projects or of the web of neoliberal discourse, many normative stances will feature that have been bent to service in this way. However, when a person voices such a stance in an interview, he may not make the connections that the abstract neoliberal project makes. In other words, he may not be speaking in support of a pro-market or marketizing agenda.\textsuperscript{26}

Although it may seem overly subtle, this is an important distinction to make. If the speaker doesn’t make the connection between his stance and the need for more and freer markets, then to label his stance neoliberal exaggerates the reach of this governance project (see Ferguson, 2010). It is true that the trail has been blazed from the point where he stands to the neoliberal conclusions and that there is the real possibility that he will follow that path in the future. But not all roads lead to neoliberalism. Some stances can follow alternative logics whose paths also have been blazed. For that reason, it makes sense to speak of stances as having neoliberal potential when there is no clear indication that the speaker intends to support the larger neoliberal project. Stances that can be linked to multiple political projects can be described as pluripotent, analogous to stem cells in their ability to take the form of many different cells in the body.

The appearance of a “neoliberal” stance (i.e. a stance that in some circumstances has been articulated to a larger neoliberal project) in a person’s discourse can’t be taken as a sign that the person supports neoliberalism as a project, in all its aspects. This is why I have insisted

\textsuperscript{26} These kinds of slippages contribute to the imprecise character of the concept of neoliberalism identified by Barnett (2005). I agree with Heynen et al. (2007) that we should not be too quick to jettison the term. What I am proposing is a finer analysis of the way different norms are articulated (or not) into political projects with particular objectives. Terms like neoliberalism are useful for designating those objectives but become more problematic when applied summarily to any stances that resemble either those objectives or others that have been articulated to them.
throughout this chapter on the importance of focusing on the processes by which individuals adopt normative stances. The manifestation of a “neoliberal” stance is only one piece of information, representing one contextualized assertion. Analyzing the material and discursive context of the assertion can tell us how deep the conviction runs. It can tell us what other stances are seen as necessary corollaries and just as importantly what stances are not. It can tell us what conditions are seen as necessary for the assertion to be valid, and what other stances might replace it as conditions change. In any of these aspects, the individual may depart significantly from the commonly identified neoliberal perspectives (even recognizing that these perspectives are themselves multiple).

The implications for the study of moral economy are significant. The relationship of a moral economy to a political project is never one-to-one correspondence. Moral economies are far too complex to be designated as according with or resisting a single political project. A community or constituency may display predispositions favourable toward a project, but the tensions are just as important as the areas of accord. Even more critical are the specific logics by which support or rejection are justified, since a shift in circumstances could invalidate an argument and open up opportunities for rearticulation. How individuals understand circumstances, in turn, is foundational to their assessment of both the political project and the processes in which it intervenes. These are all aspects of the political realm that need to be borne in mind in any effort to identify moral economies and define their relationship to key political projects of the day.

If moral economies are not as homogenous as the literature implies, if there is a greater range of perspectives within social groups and classes, then is the description of individual normative outlooks all that we can aspire to? I don’t believe so. In this chapter I have laid out some of the ways that social and political factors have decisive influences on individual normative views. While I give special attention to the individual level of politics – the level at which a person adopts one normative political stance over another – I see the processes that operate at this level as indivisible from what are generally thought of as larger scale processes, such as the consolidation and extension of political projects like neoliberalism.

To capture the relationship between individual outlooks and political projects, something like a moral economy is useful – a description of a political outlook and the normative arguments
justifying it that predominate in a given social group. After laying out my methods in the next chapter, I set about the task of identifying social cleavages and the group boundaries that result. It is here that I depart from the moral economy literature – I devote considerable attention to the complex processes by which social actors strive to define the groups that they belong to or stand apart from. These processes of social identity definition taking place within the heart of social groups and classes are glossed over by too quick ascriptions of moral economies. Chapter Four, which treats the strategic deployment of such labels as “Vermont” and “flatlander” in political struggles over land use, seeks to provide a fuller analysis of the formation and maintenance of social identities in Vermont. In that chapter I introduce the cultural complex as a means of describing the multiple components that contribute to group identity. The following chapter illustrates the outcomes of a more statistical approach to the same question about group differentiation. It focuses on how normative stances on land use can be used to identify two separate clusters of views in the broader community. These views show some significant internal heterogeneity which I explore by connecting them to interview material in subsequent chapters, seeking to illuminate the social and mental processes that lead people to adopt particular stances. By taking these approaches, I hope to extend the concept of the moral economy, giving it the capacity to account for the ways that the heterogeneity of views within a community can still produce dominant outlooks.
Chapter 3: Methods – Interviews and Survey

In structuring my field research, I found the question of access to the benefits derived from land to be a useful optic. It set the stage to ask normative questions that eventually led to a full-fledged engagement with the moral economy. In their theory of access, Ribot and Peluso (2003) distinguish between property rights and access. Whereas property rights are legal entitlements to such benefits as the use of resources from a piece of land or control of entry onto the land, access is the actual ability to partake of the benefits in question. Many factors can affect how the benefits from land are distributed, and the law takes into account only a fraction of those. People may make use of land illegally, such as by trespassing or poaching. They may also use land in a way that they do not have a legal right to but is tolerated or permitted by those who do have the right. Users in such situations can develop an attachment to a benefit that they have no control over. Conversely, property owners may have a technical right to do something with their land that they refrain from doing; they may choose not to subdivide a parcel in order to keep it in the working landscape, believing this to be a benefit to the broader community. By focusing on actual use of the land, rather than abstract rights over it, a more living, embodied view of people’s relationship to the land emerges. At the same time, the normative ideals embodied in the notion of rights can illuminate much about the motivations for actions people take. People may define rights differently than the law does; this distinction is the impetus for the study of moral economies. Furthermore, normative ideals can extend beyond the specific notion of rights to cover things people think are proper or fair even where there is no legitimate way to enforce them. Ribot and Peluso’s notion of access opens up these questions in a way that straight legal discussions of property rights do not.

This chapter describes the approach I took in trying to understand the factors influencing residents’ access to land-based benefits in Vermont. Asking about access in relation to land first of all involves identifying the benefits whose distribution is of most concern to the people I was interviewing. Following the lead of the moral economy literature, I decided to leave this identification of key benefits open as I went into the field. I wanted to hear what the participants
in my research felt were the most important aspects of the land in their lives and what made those aspects important to them. Once they identified these benefits, I would be able to get into questions about their distribution and participants’ normative judgments of that distribution.

The goal of the research was to understand how variously positioned Vermont residents narrate and negotiate the factors affecting access to land and natural resources. I wanted to uncover whatever patterns existed in the understandings people developed of these factors and the norms they applied to them. In the long term, I would like to have a sense of what contributes to the formation of these norms and understandings, but this research only lays the groundwork for that larger project. It provides a careful description of the similarities and differences in the way a range of people think about land and human use of it. It identifies some of the main cleavages in these ways of thinking. Because of the small sample size, this research does not allow any firm conclusions about the distribution of these views according to various demographic variables (such as occupations, income levels, residential status, gender, etc.), though some of the patterns are suggestive of areas that may warrant further study. Instead, what I try to do is convey a sense of the logics that are operating in people’s thinking and show some of the variations on the themes. Variations that emerge as common to several people in my sample form the kernel of my analysis, suggesting the presence of factors that are operating across a larger scale. It remains to be seen whether the conclusions that I draw from the 33 people that I interviewed apply more generally across the state, and indeed further afield.

The program of research that I undertook had a number of phases, some of them overlapping. One “phase” was in fact ongoing, beginning before I got into the field and continuing once I returned to Toronto. This was the collection of relevant secondary sources that would inform my analysis. The first discrete phase of field work was a series of interviews that I conducted with members of different “access groups” in the general population. Access groups were a loose way of identifying people with specific characteristics (e.g., hunters, homeowners, etc.) that I surmised might affect the way they viewed the land and the benefits derived from it. The next phase of the field work was the identification of a case study that arose from the previous phase. The focus of this case study was the conservation of the working landscape. Data collection continued with this new focus and I conducted a second set of interviews, this time with key
informants who were active on this topic either because of their profession or because of their participation in organizations that were occupied with this concern. Although this phase was extremely productive and raised a number of significant questions, I ultimately decided to separate the two phases of work and focus on the first set of interviews in this dissertation. Nevertheless, the interviews on the working landscape were crucial to forming a deep understanding of the context of the issues raised in the first set of interviews and I draw on them in the chapters that follow (particularly in Chapter 5). The final phase of the field research was the construction of a survey that set out the main features of the debates identified in the previous phases. I took this survey back to the participants from the access groups. The survey complements the interviews I conducted with them several months earlier by creating a common set of items to which each person responded. Thus, whereas the focus in the interviews could differ markedly from one person to the next, the survey could bring them all into the same “conversation.”

In this chapter I will describe the two key components of my research in more detail, beginning with the access group interviews. After describing the access groups and how I translated them into a sampling strategy, I will sketch out the interview approach. I will then shift to the survey and describe the analytic methodology on which it was constructed — Q method, a specific application of factor analysis. The general results from the survey will be presented in Chapter 5 after a discussion of the social landscape of the study area in the intervening chapter. Subsequent chapters will draw on the interviews and the survey in more detail as they explore the central issues that emerged from the research.

### 3.1 Interviews

#### 3.1.1 Sampling

As mentioned above, the same sample was used for the survey as for the interviews. To construct this sample I used an approach of theoretical sampling driven by the effort to maximize heterogeneity (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying significant axes of difference in the community under study and seeking representatives from each resulting group. Given my focus on land use and in particular social conflict stemming from different uses, I chose to begin by
constructing a typology of uses to guide my sampling decisions. I identified six categories of land use that I wanted to differentiate (see Table 1). I drew up these categories with the intent to address how and to whom the benefits the land produces are allocated, in the belief that this perspective would shed light on land use conflicts. From these categories I then generated a list of groups with an interest in using land in the way identified by the category, for instance, trappers as a group fit into the category concerned with “land providing raw material for commodity production.” Once I had a fairly comprehensive list of groups organized by category of land use, I narrowed the list down to just over 20 groups that I judged to be most central to land use dynamics, based on literature and on experience in the community (see lower boxes in each section of Table 1). These formed the basis of my sampling strategy. I attempted to include at least two people from each of the groups in my interviews and survey.

Table 1: Categories of land use and access groups guiding sample selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land as site</th>
<th>uses of land as the site for buildings – residential, commercial, institutional; uses of land as the site for infrastructure – roads, electricity production and transmission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homeowners, renters, second-home owners, developers/real estate agents, construction industry owners/ workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land providing raw material for commodity production</th>
<th>uses of natural resources for the production of goods for sale; extractive industries and farming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers, loggers, wood products industry workers, foresters, trappers, non-timber forest product users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land providing resources for direct use</th>
<th>non-commodity use of natural resources; including both collection of resources on one’s own property and on other’s or public property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunters, anglers, non-timber forest product users, wood fuel users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land as habitat</th>
<th>uses of land to sustain non-human organisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmentalists, ecologists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Land as provider of environmental services

- uses of land to absorb wastes generated by human activities, to regulate climate and water cycles, pollination and pest control
- Waste producers, farmers, (everyone)

Land as setting

- uses of land as a backdrop for experiences; recreational, tourist, aesthetic uses of land, both personal and commercialized
- Motorized recreationalists, non-motorized recreationalists, owners of tourism dependent businesses, workers in tourist service work

The actual choice of individuals for the sample involved a few steps. I began by soliciting names of potential participants from contacts I had in the community. Since this is the region where I grew up and where my family still lives, I had many contacts at my disposal. As a general rule in choosing participants, I sought the names of people whom I did not know or whom I knew only very casually. I collected approximately 240 names of potential participants from my contacts. From these names I ultimately talked to 33 people in 26 interviews. The process of narrowing the list was guided by my desire for heterogeneity, and in particular to avoid bias toward people who were a part of my own larger community. My contacts usually gave me a grab-bag of information on each person. From that information I tried to identify people who had a solid footing in the group I was trying to interview. By solid footing, I mean people who seemed to have had enough relevant experiences to have formed an opinion. Naturally what this entailed would differ from one group to the next. I also paid attention to informal cues about the social groups that I describe as “cultural complexes” in the next chapter and when possible ensured that I was getting people from both sides. In many of the cases, though, the information on each person was patchy. To some extent this lack of information is positive in that it reduces the chance that what I knew about a person’s politics or background biased me toward or against their selection.

In constructing my sample, I also specifically sought the perspectives of people from the general population rather than experts or activists. My reasoning was that politically active people were already voicing their opinions, and often claiming to represent the opinions of less active people;
I suspected that the perspectives among the general population were more mixed, and it was that complexity that I was hoping to address in my research\textsuperscript{27}. This criterion proved to be especially challenging to put into play, since my contacts often sought to give me the “best” names in particular categories, which frequently meant people who were very active politically. What I wanted instead was the name of a neighbour who happened to be a farmer or a second-home owner or a wood fuel user. It was often surprisingly difficult to convince people that that was what I wanted. And when I did get those people’s names and contacted them, it was sometimes difficult to convince them that I was actually interested in their opinions.

For some of the groups I targeted for interviews, it was easy to find participants; for others this was less true. Many of the groups were overlapping, so that some groups were adequately represented without my making any particular effort; homeowners was the clearest example. Some of the occupational groups presented particular challenges, partly because the category is segmented into so many different possible occupations that the numbers of potential people for each group were sometimes quite small. In general my approach to occupation was focused by sector (e.g., the wood products sector), but I tried to make sure that I heard from people in a range of positions within the sector, i.e., from both management and workers. I accomplished that for the construction sector and for the tourist industry, but I did not manage to interview any workers in saw mills or wood production facilities. The two mill employees I interviewed were in management positions, however they were in small enough mills and their personal backgrounds were such that I would be surprised if there was a chasm separating their views from those of workers at the mill. I confronted the same issue with farms – I interviewed farmers but not farm workers.

The issue of underrepresented groups in my sample is important. With a small sample like mine, underrepresentation of some groups is inevitable. However, I recognize that underrepresentation is not random and that many of the groups that I did not hear from are among the least powerful in society at large (farm workers for instance are often undocumented immigrants from Latin

\textsuperscript{27} One example that confirmed this impression came from an interview with Vermont Land Trust employee John Roe in his discussion of the Champion Land controversy, a dispute over the proper management of a newly acquired piece of state land. He said that he was approached by people who felt that the intensity of the debate made it so they didn’t feel they could safely voice their opinion in the public debates.
America). If they are not already part of the researcher’s social circle, access to some groups is largely mediated by social service providers or employers (e.g., homeless people, public housing residents, factory workers) who may be reluctant to provide names. The terms by which access is provided may also work against inclusion in the sample. I went to significant lengths to include residents of subsidized rental housing (through the Lamoille Housing Partnership), but had no success; I suspect this was because LHP preferred that I contact them through the mail with a mail-back envelope rather than on the phone as I did in other cases.

It wasn’t until half-way through the research that I started to have any problems at all convincing people to agree to meet with me. That was the point that I started to see that I needed to interview more workers and more renters or low-income residents. I got the names of workers from a few employers in the construction and wood products industries and these were my first refusals. Mostly people said they were too busy, which one could certainly take at face value. However, it could also have indicated a suspicion or even hostility toward the project, which would not be surprising given the anti-academic tone of some of the comments in interviews that I did manage to conduct (an issue I discuss more fully in Chapter 4 and 6). The open-ended nature of the research may also have worked against me here; people who were unexcited about talking about their perspectives on land use and the benefits derived from land generally might have had more to say to someone doing a project on hunting or property tax policy, for instance.

I believe that I have collected a wide-ranging set of perspectives on land use, effectively covering the political terrain. That said, I think there is call for more targeted research that specifically seeks out marginalized groups in rural Vermont to see if their concerns follow the lines of what I have uncovered or whether they depart in significant ways. Such research would probably require a different sampling strategy than the chain referral (“snowball”) strategy that I employed, perhaps one that involved collaborating with organizations that advocate for or offer services to these groups. Alternatively, and perhaps more effectively, a chain referral sample might work with a research topic that was elaborated more specifically around issues of concern to the populations of interest and that put significant effort into cultivating relationships in relevant social networks (for example McCandless’ 2008 work with Latino farmworkers in Vermont).
It should be emphasized that I never intended this research to determine the percentages of people within a community who advocate various political stances. A theoretical sampling method, as opposed to a random method, doesn’t allow these sorts of conclusions. I sought to interview enough people, with a broad enough range of experiences, to ensure that the main perspectives on land use issues would emerge. The question of proportions is interesting, particularly in a majority-rules democratic system, and this research lays some of the groundwork for conducting larger scale research into those proportions, but in itself it shouldn’t be construed as evidence on that issue.

3.1.2 Conduct of Interviews
The interviews themselves were semi-structured in format; they covered a defined set of topics but within each topic there was significant flexibility in how the participants could express themselves (Longhurst, 2010; Patton, 2002). They typically lasted between an hour and two hours. Most of them were conducted at the participants’ homes, though some took place in public spaces arranged for that purpose (e.g., a church and municipal offices). They were recorded with a digital audio recorder. Of the 26 interviews I conducted, seven of them were with two people from the same family, generally spouses or partners, but in one case parent and child.

The broad focus of the interviews was on access to the benefits derived from land. Each interview opened by my asking for a fairly extensive account of the participants’ biographies (see Appendix for interview guide). I asked about the places they had lived and what they had liked and disliked about those places. I also asked about the kinds of work they had engaged in, particularly work that put them in contact with the land. The interview then moved on to the ways that land had been important to the participants. I asked about changes in their access to those land-derived benefits, what they saw as the causes of those changes, and how they had responded to those changes. At this point, I broadened the interview to cover their view of how society deals with land use issues. I asked about conflicts over land that they were aware of and what they thought explained those conflicts. I also asked about efforts to resolve the conflicts and what their assessment of those efforts was and whether they thought other approaches might be more effective. My last question was what their ideal vision of Vermont was over the next
decade or two. I ended the interview by asking if they had anything else to add that we hadn’t covered. Once the interview was over, I asked them to fill out a short demographic questionnaire. Throughout the interview, as participants mentioned topics that were meaningful to them, I departed from the interview guide to flesh out their perspectives.

Although I had initially intended to include a section that covered participants’ membership in organizations that addressed land use issues and their political activity more generally, I quickly found that there was not enough time to cover this extensive topic and chose to restrict the interviews to normative perspectives. The effect of this choice has been that I have limited data for discussion of political action. I hope to address this important issue in future research; I believe it will require more intensive methods, such as multiple interviews with the same participant.

My overall impression of the interviews was that people showed a surprising degree of candour and willingness to talk about their uncertainties. This confirmed for me the sense that the highly partisan language that I heard in the political arena did not do justice to the complex sentiments of many of the people in the general population whose views this language was supposed to represent. This isn’t to say that the participants didn’t support these public political discourses; often they did. But their considerations of them introduced questions or concerns that were often absent from these discourses. This dissertation is largely an effort to bring some of those moderating concerns out into public.

Upon completion of the field work I returned to Toronto and transcribed the interviews. Most of the interviews are transcribed verbatim with careful attention to pauses and rewordings that affect meaning or might convey ambivalence. Some passages of the interviews that were less central to the research questions were transcribed with a broader brush. The interviews were transcribed using Transana, a software that allows transcription and coding of digital audio or video data. This software allowed me to return easily to specific points in the audio recording to check the wording and refine the transcription throughout the analysis.

Analysis of the interviews began with an extensive system of coding (Cope, 2010). I developed almost 250 codes to cover the responses in three different categories: commitments and values;
threats and problems; actions and practices. These codes were stored in a simple database in Microsoft Access allowing substantial flexibility in querying and organizing them. The coding functioned primarily as an index to the interviews; it was not the basis of a quantitative analysis of discourses. As I worked on understanding specific issues that I planned to include in the dissertation, I used the coding to pull up all the relevant references from the interviews.

The coding also allowed me to see some of the patterns in the interviews. By printing out the coding of a single interview and comparing it to another I could quickly grasp the different patterns of concern and stances that characterized each and zero in on areas that stood out as anomalous. Also the sequence of discursive items in the coding could be a very condensed but meaningful picture of the connections that the participant made, or in the language of the previous chapter, of the causal models they employed.

The primary value of the coding was to give me some tools to start to see patterns which I could then explore by returning to the relevant passages of the interviews. In this research project, I saw the role of the interviews as providing rich detail and often as preventing premature closure of a topic. The survey methods that I describe in the next section provide a highly condensed picture of the participants, such that some of the important details of their perspectives fall out of the picture. The interviews provide a crucial balance to the reductive tendency of the survey (a tendency which as much as possible I try to counteract in my quantitative analyses also). I have tried to find a balance between pattern and detail throughout this dissertation. My own leanings pull me toward the detail end of the balance. As is evident in the previous chapter, I bring a sceptical eye to generalizations. Nevertheless, I recognize the need to perceive regularities and trends and the combination of coding and survey methods allowed me to make some observations that might not otherwise have occurred to me.

I have deep respect for the participants of the interviews and wish I could devote more space in this dissertation to each of them. Apart from the need to be succinct, another consideration prevents me from presenting too detailed a picture of each participant. As part of the agreement with each participant, I guaranteed each of them anonymity, including not only the use of pseudonyms but also refraining from providing details that would make them recognizable. As the study area is quite small in population, this means that I can only use details of their
biography sparingly in my descriptions. I regret this, because I believe that it makes it more
difficult for readers to empathize with the interview participants. It also changes the nature of
my presentation; I cannot present a very rich picture of the social context from which each
person emerges. I believe that this social context has a strong influence on the normative
perspectives that I study. However, since this research is not primarily an effort to determine the
sources of the normative perspectives, the veil across participants’ biographies does not
fundamentally compromise my arguments. Future work that does address these questions will
have to approach anonymity differently.

Table 2: Research Participant Characteristics (all names are pseudonyms; any resemblance
to the names of actual residents of Vermont is purely coincidental)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Recreational Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Arsenault</td>
<td>Logger/forester; multi-generational Vermonter</td>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>$30,000-$50,000</td>
<td>Family continues to farm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Barnard</td>
<td>owner of a small company in the construction industry; second generation Vermonter;</td>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>No political party</td>
<td>(declined) Snowmobiling enthusiast; camp owner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Bowen</td>
<td>executive at large tourism-based firm; moved to Vermont as an adult;</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>$150,000+ Hunter. Non-motorized recreationalist.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei Carleton</td>
<td>real estate; multi-generational Vermonter;</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>$75,000-100,000</td>
<td>Hunter. From a farm family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Cartwright</td>
<td>landscaper; multi-generational Vermonter;</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Independent but “leans toward Republican.”</td>
<td>$50,000-75,000</td>
<td>Hunter and angler. Motorized and non-motorized recreationalist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Chisholm</td>
<td>real estate; moved to Vermont as adult.</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>$30,000-50,000</td>
<td>Manages her own wood lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan Chisholm</td>
<td>real estate; moved to Vermont as adult.</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>$30,000-50,000</td>
<td>Manages his own wood lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Collins</td>
<td>dairy farmer; multi-generational Vermonter.</td>
<td>21-35</td>
<td>Almost never Republican, usually Democratic, Progressive or independent.”</td>
<td>$30,000-50,000</td>
<td>Non-motorized recreationalist. Environmentalist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Collins</td>
<td>dairy farmer; multi-generational Vermonter.</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Democrat and Progressive.</td>
<td>$15,000-30,000</td>
<td>Non-motorized recreationalist. Environmentalist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Daniels</td>
<td>semi-retired, self employed in home and landscape maintenance; multi-generational Vermonter;</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>No political party.</td>
<td>$50,000 to 75,000</td>
<td>Manages his own woodlot for fuel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Flannery</td>
<td>livestock farmer; multi-generational Vermonter.</td>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>No current political party: “Former Republican, still a Vermont Republican.”</td>
<td>$30,000 to 50,000.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Forrestal</td>
<td>hospitality industry worker; moved to Vermont as an adult.</td>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>Democrat.</td>
<td>$15,000 less than</td>
<td>Renter. Non-motorized recreationalist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Goodman</td>
<td>Retired teacher; multi-generational Vermonter, grew up in Vermont, left the state for her working life but maintained a connection throughout, retired to family land in Vermont.</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>Democrat.</td>
<td>$30,000-50,000.</td>
<td>Hunter. Has owned livestock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norton Goodman</td>
<td>Retired teacher; multi-generational Vermonter, grew up in Vermont, left the state for his working life but maintained a connection throughout, retired to family land in Vermont.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age 65+. Democrat. HH income $30,000-50,000. Hunter. Has owned livestock.

Patrick Hall – retired from interior construction/decoration; third generation Vermonter. Age 65+. No political party. HH income less than $15,000. Hunter. Trapper.

Mickey Jackson – non-profit director; second generation Vermonter. Age 36-50. “Normally Republican, may be seeking a new party.” $75,000-100,000. Motorized recreationalist. Former construction worker.

Erica Keller – planning consultant; moved to Vermont as an adult. Age 36-50. No declared political party. HH income $75,000 to 100,000. Non-motorized recreationalist.

Larry Kingsbury – Retired teacher; multi-generational Vermonter. Age 65+. No declared political party. HH income $50,000-75,000. User of non-timber forest products.

Arthur Konig – high school teacher, second-home owner, has come to Vermont home for holidays for more than thirty years, plans to retire to it. Age 65+. Democrat. HH income 100,000 – 150,000.

Marianne Konig – high school teacher, second-home owner, has come to Vermont home for holidays for more than thirty years, plans to retire to it. Age 65+. Democrat. HH income 100,000 – 150,000.


Denise Laraway – owner and sales manager of equipment company; multi-generational Vermonter. Age 21-35. HH income $75,000-100,000. Motorized and non-motorized recreationalist.

Ken Lines – ecologist; moved to Vermont as an adult; has worked in recreation. Age 36-50. Democrat. HH income $15,000-30,000.

Emily Marks – social worker; multi-generational Vermonter. Age 36-50. Democrat. HH income $30,000-50,000. Renter. Lived in Vermont part time as a child. (Did not take survey)

Peter Marquette – construction industry worker; moved to Vermont as a child. Age 36-50. Democrat. HH income $15,000-30,000.


Alvin Moore – farmer/ woodland manager; second-generation Vermonter; Age 51-65. No political party given. HH income declined.

Angela Morton – clerical/administrative work; second-generation Vermonter; former farmer; Age 51-65. No political party. HH income declined.

Jeremiah Morton – construction work – small family business; multi-generational Vermonter; former farmer; nearing retirement. (no demographic survey completed28).

Harold Price – retired farmer and craftsman; moved to Vermont as an adult. Age 65+. Democrat. HH income $30,000-50,000. Manages woodlot.


Dennis Tremblay – logger, woodland manager; multi-generational Vermonter. Age 65+. HH income $30,000-50,000. Renter.

Elaine Tremblay – home maintenance; multi-generational Vermonter. Age 65+. HH income $30,000 – 49,000. Renter.

28 Jeremiah Morton had to leave before the end of the interview, so I didn’t get a demographic survey from him.
3.2 Survey

The intention motivating my choice to use survey methods was to generate a profile of each participant that could be meaningfully compared to the profiles of others. In settling on a research design, I wanted to be able to provide a rigorous description of commonalities and differences among the people I interviewed. On the surface, in the heat of the political realm, there seems to be a gaping chasm separating Vermont’s population into two groups. That chasm has a social reality that I do not dismiss (see the following chapter on cultural complexes) however I was also interested in whether the chasm reflected systematic differences in political convictions and values. Identification of such differences, and of any systematic character they possess, led me to analytic techniques that treat individuals holistically by analyzing the distinctive pattern that emerges for each individual in the way he or she responds to the survey items taken together as a whole. In other words, a participant’s 45 responses are treated as a composite portrait of that person’s normative perspective on land use. Using a variant of factor analysis called Q method, I sought to determine if the profiles of some participants were similar enough to others to form a distinct cluster, set off from others who may or may not form a cluster (Brown, 1980; McKeown and Thomas, 1988).

As used in my research, factor analysis looks for common tendencies among a number of respondents in the way they answer the survey questions and then generates a “factor” that represents the shared perspective of those people. Each person has a “loading” on the factor that represents the degree to which the factor represents their views. Loadings are scaled from 1.0 to -1.0 with negative numbers indicating that the participant’s position is opposite that of the factor. Loadings close to zero indicate that the participant’s views have little correlation with the factor.

A factor represents a composite of the responses of a number of participants, where highly loaded participants have the most influence on the composition of the factor. These composites allow similar perspectives among groups of participants to emerge and be captured as factors.
Multiple factors can emerge, each representing different groups in the sample of participants. Comparison of these factors allows the researcher to discuss trends in the views of different groups that are impossible to see when looking at individual responses.

For this reason, factor analysis is often described as a technique of dimension reduction. Each person can be thought of as a dimension, and each survey item can be plotted on that dimension according to the person’s response (i.e., -4 to +4). A bi-plot comparing the responses of two participants would put one participant on the $x$-axis and the other on the $y$-axis; survey questions would then be plotted in two dimensions according to the responses of both participants (see Figure 8). Each additional participant to be compared requires an additional dimension. Beyond three participants it is impossible to visualize the location of survey items in space. However, they can still be treated mathematically. Each survey item in my data has a precise location in a 32 dimensional space, specified by the responses of each participant. They form a “swarm” of 45 points in that space. The calculation of a factor involves finding a line through that swarm of points that is as close as possible to all the points at once. As a result the spread of points when projected onto the line (the variance) is as great as possible (Pielou, 1984). The next factor is found in the same manner with the stipulation that the line found must be orthogonal (at right angles) to the first line. In this way, a series of factors is found that accounts for decreasing amounts of variance in the sample data. In other words, the first factor will have the most and/or the highest loadings and therefore best represent the most participants.
A factor analysis produces as many factors as there are participants, however as opposed to the original data where each participant is equally important, the factors are progressively less important. That means that one may analyze only the first few factors and capture the major trends in the data. There are various approaches to deciding how many factors to retain in the final analysis. Two common methods make use of eigenvalues of each factor which represent the amount of variance explained by that factor. The Kaiser criterion retains all factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The Cattell test plots the factors’ eigenvalues on an x-y coordinate plane (see Figure 9 in Chapter 5) and looks for a distinct “elbow” where the amount of variance explained levels off and retains the factors above the elbow. Many plots don’t have one clear elbow, however, making this test something of a judgement call. Garson (2011) counsels a combination of methods governed by the overriding imperative of comprehensibility, meaning that whatever factors are retained should be interpretable.

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29 The eigenvalue is the sum of the squared factor loadings of each participant for a factor. The eigenvalues of all the factors total to equal the same number as the respondents (in my case 32).
Factor analysis is most frequently used to identify factors among survey items or other variables measured across the participants. The use of this technique to identify factors among participants is less common and is known as Q method (while the more common approach is known as R method) (Brown, 1980). The statistical calculation of factors is nearly identical; the data is simply inverted (rows changed to columns and vice versa) to change from one method to another.\(^{30}\) Where a typical R approach might look at whether the sample’s response to one question correlates to their response to another (or whether some demographic variable is correlated to the response on a survey item), Q methodology looks for correlations between individuals in the way they respond to all the survey items. Ultimately the aim is to be able to portray dominant perspectives within the community on the topic of research.

One of the issues that is raised with Q analysis is the small number of people typically used to determine factors. Scholars used to R methods sometimes question the reliability of the results of Q analysis saying that the sample size is inadequate. Actually, because of the inversion of the data, the phenomena that are designated as the “sample” also changes. In Q method the survey items (the statements) are the sample and the participants are the variables they are measured on. This difference is critical in the determination of reliability (Brown, 1980, pp. 191-192, 260, 279-288).

An illustration should help clarify the issue. A factor analysis following R methodology is trying to create factors composed of survey questions. Its aim is to be able to assert that question 1 and question 2 are closely related because most of the respondents answered them following the same pattern (e.g. if they gave #1 a +3, they gave #2 a -3). This becomes convincing only when you have enough people taking the survey. If the sample only included two people, then a similar rating could be just chance and not a reflection of the questions themselves.

By contrast, Q is seeking to assert that person 1 and person 2 are closely related. The more questions you can ask the more valid your assertion will be. But it doesn’t actually matter how many people are surveyed. The number of people is immaterial to the question of how closely the people you did survey are related to one another. Reliability in a Q survey is based on the

\(^{30}\) Q method can only be performed on data that is measured in the same scale (i.e., all questions must use the same rating system). This means that many datasets used in typical R analyses cannot be inverted and analyzed using Q method. As a result, Brown (1980) objects to calling Q method “inverse factor analysis.”
number of questions asked rather than the number of people who take the survey. One area where Q surveys need to be careful is when people seek to generalize the results to a larger population. Whether a given participant’s response can be taken as representative of a specified group in the population depends on the sorts of issues that those familiar with R methods raise.

3.2.1 The content of the survey

I developed the survey items through a series of steps, drawing on the information I had gathered in the access group interviews and the subsequent key informant interviews. The survey consisted of a set of 45 statements mostly related to land use, but also pulling in other issues that had arisen as relevant during the interviews. The participants were asked to rate each statement on a scale of +4 to -4 according to how strongly they agreed or disagreed with it. It is common for Q surveys to specify the number of statements to be assigned each value (e.g. 3 statements for +4 and -4; 4 statements for +3 and -3 etc.) to achieve a normal distribution of statements across the scale. However, Brown (1980, pp. 280-1) shows that the choice to use forced or unforced distributions has an insignificant effect on the statistical outcome of the factor analysis. I chose not to force the participants to produce a normal distribution because I felt that this could lead them to assign a rating to a statement that doesn’t reflect their actual feeling about it if the slots for that rating were already occupied by other statements; I was more interested in the actual level of agreement than the rank order of agreements, which a forced distribution would produce.31

In most cases the survey was conducted face to face so that I could answer questions and note any comments or confusion. In four cases, I wasn’t able to arrange a face to face meeting so I printed a paper version of the survey and mailed it32. All but one of these respondents returned a completed survey. Of the 33 people I interviewed in the fall, 32 participated in the survey33.

31 In all but one case, the respondents agreed with more statements than they disagreed with, something that would be inadmissible with a normal distribution constraint.
32 These two different formats may have affected the responses slightly. One of the respondents (Metcalf) who took the survey with paper and pencil had an unusual distribution with 19 answers in the +4 category and no more
The set of statements presented to the respondent receives special emphasis in Q methodology. Given that Q inverts the typical approach to factor analysis by correlating respondents rather than survey items, what gets called the “sample” is also inverted. The sample is taken to be the set of questions rather than the people who provide the responses on those questions. For that reason, researchers using Q method put considerable effort into constructing their question sample. A typical approach is to create a concourse of statements that tries to come as close to comprehensiveness as is feasible given time and resource constraints, and then to select a sample of statements from that concourse that is representative of the whole according to some theoretically significant dimensions. Brown (1980) demonstrates that many different theoretically significant dimensions are possible, reflecting the interests and concerns of the researcher. His argument suggests that there is no objectively “right” way to create a sample framework; rather such frameworks “serve primarily as a way for the investigator to be explicit about his own vantage point” (p. 189). The researcher’s subjective judgment plays a significant role in assessments of concourse comprehensiveness and of the representativeness of the final statement sample (Eden, Donaldson and Walker, 2005), which leads Robbins and Krueger (2000) to question some of the claims to objectivity made by some Q methodology advocates. Ultimately, Q methodology doesn’t give an unbiased window into participants’ subjectivity, but it can be a useful tool when the researcher is sufficiently transparent about how he or she used it.

My goal in creating the sample was to present a series of statements that highlighted the controversies over land use that emerged in the 59 interviews that I had conducted by that point. In developing the question sample I employed two different approaches to categorizing statements. First I identified six main themes that I deemed important to address. These were: a) traditional uses of the land; b) habitats and ecosystems; c) development and its effects; d) oversight of land use; e) economic aspects of land use; f) social conflict. Using these themes as

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33 The one person I didn’t ever reach had left her job and may have left the area. I was unable to contact her.
guides, I generated a list of potential statements that covered the main sub-points of each. Recognizing that the generality of these themes limited their usefulness beyond a certain point, I then reclassified the statements using much more specific categories, e.g., “bad business climate,” “Vermont’s green reputation,” and “land ethic.” This two step approach ensured that I began with a broad perspective, supporting the effort to be comprehensive, but that at the same time I address the concrete issues that arose in people’s discussions of their experience dealing with land.

As stated above, the format of this survey consisted of a declarative statement with which the respondent was asked to state his or her level of agreement. One common practice in Q surveys is to lift statements from interviews and reproduce them, with minor modifications, in the survey. The rationale is that the researcher knows that the statements reflects actual stances of participants which results in a lower risk of misinterpretation (McKeown and Thomas, 1988). I found that the statements in my interviews were so embedded in the running conversation that extracting them often changed their meanings considerably. Instead I wrote statements that drew directly on the interviews but were formulated with an eye on clear wording and inclusion of appropriate contextual information so as to reduce ambiguity as much as possible. This approach is similar to the “hybrid” approach to sample design, integrating naturalistic and ready-made approaches as described by McKeown and Thomas (1988).

Since my research is particularly concerned with the political stances that people adopt – their ideas about how society should be organized – I structured the survey to get at normative principles. A typical statement includes the word “should” or one of its synonyms. Sometimes the normative component is less evident, but is still clearly present upon closer inspection, e.g., “Land trusts have already protected enough land” – the implication being that they should therefore stop seeking out new parcels to conserve. Occasionally I used statements that are positive rather than normative in character, proposing a fact that people can choose to either accept as true or reject as false, for example “In the U.S.’s food production system, quality, nutrition and the environment are treated as less important than the economic bottom line.” The use of positive statements is interesting to me because it shows the extent to which the interpretation of “reality” and the proposition of “facts” are contested. When I used positive
statements it was to investigate issues where different causal models of salient processes are competing against each other (especially in economics and ecology).

One of the important decisions I had to make was how complex to make the statements. The more complex the statement, the greater the risk that different respondents (not to mention the researcher) will interpret it differently, making comparison of responses misleading. On the other hand, complex statements (particularly statements with two or more components) allow the researcher to provide context which may in fact reduce the problem of ambiguity and certainly allows a more finely targeted investigation. Many of the statements I used included a context setting element and normative claim. Although this increased the complexity of the statements, I felt that was more than compensated for by the way this construction embedded normative judgments in a real-world context.

Another issue leading to the use of complex statements was the length of the survey, which I wanted to keep to less than 50 questions. Anything longer would have taxed the patience of respondents and perhaps led to inconsistent rating. This limitation meant that I was unable to present questions in multiple forms, or separate complex questions out into two simple questions, both of which might have reduced the problem of ambiguity (though the latter approach might have been a poor solution because the link between the two components is often as important as the pieces themselves).

These efforts to ensure that the statements include important aspects of the context of land use decisions can only achieve limited success in the end. It must be acknowledged that one-sentence survey questions are necessarily abstracted from the much broader context that would have a substantial influence on actual decisions. In this regard, one of the strengths of Q method over more standard survey methods is that it does not disaggregate the 45 responses that an

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34 Much literature on the Q method advocates naturalistic statements, lifted from actual interview transcripts. Brown (1980, p. 190) recognizes that this can lead to a certain ambiguity, but argues that the participant’s interpretation and resultant response is what is important to elicit, in particular how that response relates to the responses on other statements as a holistic profile. Eden et al. (2005, p. 417) describe their reluctance to embrace this tenet and preference for one component questions. I am sympathetic to Eden et al.’s critique, but as discussed above, I do find that the extra information included in two component statements helped focus the research.
individual expresses on the survey, so as a result each of the statements can provide some measure of context for the others. This is still an admittedly attenuated reflection of the range of considerations that people entertain when faced with land use decisions.

Overall, it must be acknowledged that the rigidity of a survey is both its strength and its weakness. On one hand, it allows people to respond to a nearly identical stimulus which makes comparison easier. On the other hand, the reduction of options for expression, the corraling of opinion into a few preset choices, may not accurately reflect the issues that the respondent takes into consideration when confronted with the topic of concern. For this reason other avenues for expression play an essential role in complementing the survey responses. One such avenue is the side-comments or questions that the respondent voices in the process of rating the statements. I took notes of all these comments and kept them with the numerical response in my table of results, so that when I considered anomalies I could see if there was an issue of interpretation that the respondent raised. Another avenue is the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that is at the heart of this research; the interviews provide a distinct view of the respondent that can help explain the survey responses, or equally can flag individual statements that may have been interpreted idiosyncratically and may be contributing to misleading results. The mixing of these two methods, involving two separate encounters with each participant, allows more confidence that the research material provides a relatively accurate view of the participants’ perspectives. Of course, more sustained contact over a longer period of time would provide even greater confidence, particularly by ensuring that significant events occurring at the time of one contact did not have undue influence on the stances participants expressed.

In the following chapter, I open a discussion of social divisions and their representation in Vermont. My examination of the role of culture in these divisions draws primarily on material from the interviews. The subsequent chapter then begins a more detailed analysis of one aspect of culture – political orientation – by reporting the results of the survey. These results provide a baseline against which I discuss the particularities of individual cases. They also highlight some of the tensions within different social groups around specific land use issues.
Chapter 4: Newcomers and Vermonters

“[V]ermont has become a two-tiered state. The higher level, the one people like [author Bill] Mares want to sell either to themselves or the rest of the world, has power and money. The lower level, the one the populists like [Frank] Bryan and John McClaughry claim to speak for, owes both time and money to other Vermonters. The one thing both groups still possess is land, and that is where the battle for Vermont’s hearts and minds will occur in the next decade.” -- editorial, Country Courier, January 11, 1990.

In this chapter I explore a submerged dichotomy in Vermont’s social relations. In discussions of social conflict in Vermont, the dichotomy that gets the most attention is newcomers versus Vermonters. This dichotomy is constantly invoked and has a number of associated labels (“flatlanders,” “real Vermonters,” “out-of-staters,” “natives”) that are in continuous circulation. The dichotomy I am investigating, by contrast, is difficult to pin down and has no easy terminology that rolls off the tongue. Even class, which in American culture is itself relatively submerged, is easier to speak about and has a vocabulary that appears more frequently in the interviews (Bottero and Irwin, 2003). The basis of the submerged dichotomy is not residential status or class but culture more broadly; it juxtaposes two distinct cultural complexes associated with characteristic traits, values, normative stances, and practices (including occupations). I argue that much of the time that people talk about what Vermonters do, believe or value, they are not talking about “Vermonters” per se, but about members of this community of cultural affinity, of which residential status is but one component. Social divisions in Vermont are better explained with reference to these cultural complexes than to residential status.

When dichotomies like newcomers/Vermonters are used polemically, they are often laid over other dichotomies like political orientation, in effect saying that a person’s residential status determines his or her political views. It should be obvious that it’s not that simple, but it is

35 Boglioli notes that while insider/outsider distinctions are not uncommon in other places, Vermonters seem to invoke them with particular vigour: “In fact, comparisons to Texas for sheer state jingoism are not uncommon” (p. 132.)
harder to figure out what the relationship is between these two social categories. The idea of the cultural complex brings other factors into consideration, modulating the relationship between residential status and political orientation.

Culture is many-stranded. Each person can be seen as possessing a wide array of cultural traits, some of which are shared with people in their local community, others shared with people across the nation and even across the world. Any of these traits can have a discontinuous distribution, appearing selectively in a limited number of people in a given location (Linger, 2001, 2005). The precise combination of traits is unique for each individual. From the panoply of traits to be found among individuals, some will receive special emphasis as defining characteristics of various social groups (Bottero and Iwin, 2007; Barth, 1969). The resulting social identities can be numerous and frequently overlap (Valentine, 2007; Brumann, 1999).

The notion of the cultural complex is an effort to capture this tendency of social identities to overlap and reinforce each other – to be part of each other’s definition (see the notion of “resonance” in Campbell, 2006). In the context of conflict over land use governance, I distinguish five components that contribute to two cultural complexes in Vermont: residential status, political orientation, class, practices, and social relationships. Each of these social categories differentiates its own distinctive social groups, and my contention is that membership in any of these groups has effects on membership in the groups of other social categories. The first two components are the central focus of the dissertation. The importance of residential status is clearly evident given the ubiquity of residential labels in social conflicts in Vermont. As I laid out above, political orientation is frequently depicted as being determined by residential status. While I accept that these two components relate to one another, I use the notion of the cultural complex to argue that the relationship is contingent rather than determinate.

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36 Barth talks about the emphasis of certain traits “which the actors themselves regard as significant” in the maintenance of boundaries between ethnic groups (1969, p. 14). It is interesting to consider the extent to which multi-generational Vermonters might be regarded as an ethnic group and the cultural complex I describe as an effort at boundary maintenance.

37 It is important to recognize that the social categories that I have chosen to focus on are the ones that play a role in distinguishing between the two camps in the social divide that I am investigating. Other social categories are important to the identities of individuals I interviewed, in particular gender, but they create distinctions within the two cultural complexes rather than between them.
The other three components appear regularly in the interviews and in my analysis. My incorporation of them into the concept of the cultural complex is meant to acknowledge the important roles that they play in the development of social identities. At the same time, my research methods did not focus on them to the extent that it did on the first two, so detailed elaboration of the roles they play will have to wait for future research efforts. For present purposes, I will provide a sketch of how I see each contributing to the definition of cultural complexes.

Class is a challenging category to incorporate into an empirical analysis because it has many different meanings, both colloquial and scholarly. I am less interested in seeking measures by which to determine a person’s class position (whether those measures are personal wealth, occupation or degree of exploitation by relations of production) and more interested in how the processes behind such measures are experienced. This leads to a broader, process-based notion of class (Thompson, 1963). In my research materials, class issues arise in discussions of work relationships, particularly when one set of people works for another set within the community. Wealth and the opportunities that it enables, such as the ability to purchase land, are also sources of tension within the community that are expressed in class terms. Experiences such as these can lead to a sense of class identity, a feeling of affinity for others sharing a class position, whether this is explicitly identified with labels such as “working class” or not (Willis, 1977). I see such class identities as an important source of social identity within the broader cultural complex, but identities formed through class may not line up completely with identities formed through other axes of experience.

I include the notion of practices in my formulation of cultural complexes because I see them as a crucial means by which social identities take shape. The specific forms of the practices by which we engage each other and our environments are not neutral or empty of signification. They presuppose certain social arrangements and the values implicit in those arrangements. Many practices have long histories and feed into the key trope of tradition. Hunting is a paradigmatic example, and it plays a major role in defining social divisions over land use in Vermont (Boglioli, 2009). Other practices such as motorized and non-motorized recreation have also been flashpoints of community debate. Practices also feed into class identities, particularly when they
are tied to work and livelihood. My consideration of practices in intended to ensure that the material aspects of life and livelihood are tied in to more abstract notions of identity.

Finally the question of social interaction warrants recognition. It is closely related to practices in that most social interaction takes place by way of practices of one sort or another. I include it as a separate component in my concept of cultural complexes so as to recognize the importance of the actual playing-out of practices. Practices like hunting or gardening are pursued by specific people in specific places at specific times, bringing some people into interaction with each other while others have no actual social connection. Who relates to whom in the course of any given practice is one of the foundations on which shared identities are built. I recognize that people can share a social identity without having any actual social interaction (Anderson, 1983), but when such interactions occur, I see them as having important effects on a community’s sense of itself.

When people in Vermont are discussing what I am calling cultural complexes, they often use terminology derived from residential status. Depending on the situation, “Vermont” (particularly when preceded by the adjective “real”) may not mean “resident of Vermont” but instead may designate a person with a particular cultural orientation. In an effort to avoid confusion, in this dissertation I use the terms “local” and “outlander” to refer to the opposing cultural complexes, where the former refers to the cultural complex typically associated with Vermonters and the latter replaces the word “flatlander” and refers to the complex associated with newcomers.38

The specific content of these complexes is the subject matter for much of this dissertation; it is complex, contradictory and often difficult to specify. A key point, though, is that these two complexes have an existence quite distinct from their content (whether that be specific practices, beliefs, values or stances); they exist relationally as foils for one another (Bourdieu, 1993). Even when people disagree about what it means to be a “real Vermonter” (what I will be calling a

38 “Outlander” is not a term in regular use in Vermont, but I use it here avoid the pejorative connotation of flatlander. It also seeks to convey a sense of connection to places beyond the surrounding area, though that shouldn’t be taken to imply that locals have no such connection.
“local”), they agree that a real Vermonter stands for all that is threatened by the increasing domination of flatlanders (i.e., outlanders)\(^39\).

Within a cultural complex, each of the five social categories has expected traits that differ from the expected traits for the same social category in the other cultural complex (e.g., “Vermonter” as the expected residential status in the local cultural complex and “newcomer” in the outlander complex). Theoretically it should be possible to determine how much two groups from different social categories coincide, e.g. what proportion of Vermonters are working class or hunt or are Government Sceptics. However, most people have visions of these groups that are not formed from this sort of empirical analysis. Their visions are formed from the generalization of their own experiences and from representations drawn from the culture at large (Said, 1994; Sibley, 1995). Based on these visions, as they negotiate their daily lives, they make claims about what people in various groups say, do and think. These claims often take the form of links between different groups, or the assignation of traits from one group to another group (“Vermonters oppose land use controls”). But these claims can conflict with each other such that the defining features of a group is contested. The inevitable disputes over the traits that identify group members ensure that the cultural complexes are not monolithic but rather are dynamic and open to reformulation\(^40\). Processes of reformulation are complex and follow performative logics, as I discuss more fully in the chapter’s conclusion.

A key feature of cultural complexes is that it is possible to belong to the complex without manifesting the expected trait in a given category; no one trait automatically determines attachment to the cultural complex. However the fewer of the expected traits a person manifests across a range of categories, the more tenuous the connection to the cultural complex becomes. A multi-generational Vermonter may load highly on the Green Governance factor, thereby

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\(^39\) This has strong resonances with Campbell's (2000) observations on masculinity. He notes that while the actual ideal of masculinity remains unstated, people in social situations are constantly making reference to it and using it as a standard to evaluate people’s behaviour. Efforts to pin down what masculinity is will generally be frustrating, but nevertheless it continues to operate powerfully.

\(^40\) Linger (2001) describes the dilemma anthropologists face when informants/authorities on a culture contradict each other. “If everyone is always right, diverse (even contradictory) understandings are the very stuff of culture” (p. 11).
mixing traits from two cultural complexes. I am suggesting that the presence of this one outlander trait increases the likelihood that the Vermonter in question also manifests other traits associated with outlander culture rather than local culture, e.g. being a professional, or a cross-country skier, or someone having social relationships with people who manifest those or other outlander traits. The people that manifest all the expected traits from a cultural complex play a disproportionate role in the cultural imaginary. Of course there will be people that display unexpected mixes of traits. My point is not to deny that they exist, but to say that they defy a strong cultural logic or expectation. That expectation has enough power to push people to conceal or modify traits so that they conform to one cultural complex or the other. Some people resist that push, but many do not (Bye, 2007).

The newcomer/Vermonter dichotomy, based on residential history, has a powerful normative thrust. It privileges Vermonters, casting them as possessing superior knowledge of the land, and also situating them as rightful inhabitants of the state, the people who made the landscape and communities what they are today. This translates as an imperative to pay attention to Vermonters’ opinions above those of newcomers. The power of these normative claims makes this dichotomy rhetorically attractive, and I believe this helps to explain both its own prominence and also the submergence of the culturally based local/outlander dichotomy. When people speak about cultural difference in a contemporary liberal setting, they frequently do so in much more relativistic terms, where each culture has an equal claim to be heard and respected. Such a perspective provides little political traction in the struggle to determine land use governance.

When people assert that Vermonters don’t do yoga (see Boglioli, 2009, p 64) or don’t like zoning (as I encountered in the interviews), they are trying to collapse the two dichotomies together in an effort to confer legitimacy on the local cultural complex (and its political stances and values) by associating it with “Vermonters.” In this sense, this community is invoked ideologically, to forward a particular agenda. The speaker ascribes to an actual population

41 Frequently glossing over the original inhabitants of the state and the violent expropriation of land from Native hands in North America.
42 Yoga also features in Rusty Dewees’ “Logger” performances, where the joke depends on a real Vermonter going to a yoga class (see http://thelogger.com).
(people born in Vermont, or in a stricter formulation, people with x generations of ancestors living in Vermont) characteristics that in reality only apply to a part of the population. The displaced characteristics, those that are construed as not appearing among the population of Vermonters, are delegitimized as belonging to flatlanders.

The effort to collapse residential status with the specific outlook I’m calling the local cultural complex in the end creates more problems than it would solve. I think the debate needs to be broader and more open, not reduced to a badge of residential status. However, I do think that we need to recognize the social divisions that are at the heart of the effort to make the local agenda prevail. Locals have valid concerns. As a group they often have often have less access to decision-makers and the tools to wield influence over them, so maybe they can be forgiven for deploying their powerful rhetorical weapon – the “real Vermonter.”

This chapter presents the case for a careful examination of the rhetoric of residential status and what it may obscure. Having presented the cultural complex framework and the local/ outlander dichotomy, I next turn to a review of the literature that looks at social divisions in rural settings of the developed world, much of it coming from the study of amenity migration (movement of urbanites into rural areas to enjoy the natural and social amenities found there). I contrast the way culture is treated in two strands of literature. One is more quantitative and uses survey methods that can raise problems of a reductive or simplistic view of culture and social groups. The second strand is more ethnographic or historical and gives more attention to the ways that practices and other cultural items acquire meaning for members of the community. This second body of literature attends much more to the dynamic relationship between different components of a cultural complex. Coming into view are links between work, social life and political stances. Importantly, these authors when taken together show that how these links are formed can vary significantly depending on the specific context, and in some cases how they shift in response to changes in the context.

After the review of literature, I present material from my interviews that relates to the social divisions in Vermont. I begin with representations of the two groups. This engages questions of rhetoric, what the purposes and effects are of delineating groups by highlighting certain traits. From there I move into more specific interactions that interview participants describe. The experiences that they recount convey a sense of social distance, though the interpretation of that
distance varies from one participant to another. At the end of the chapter I return to more theoretical questions, describing a performative model of localness that considers how claims about the characteristics of a “real Vermonter” gain traction. In this last section I draw out the political implications of the social divisions in Vermont.

4.1 Literature on rural in-migration

Within scholarship on amenity migration, a branch of research concerns itself with conflicts attending the arrival of newcomers. Much of this research addresses the newcomer/long-time resident split, seeking to assess the actual degree of difference between the attitudes held by the two populations and whether the difference is as big as popular discourse makes it out to be. This research has frequently been framed as an investigation of the “culture clash” hypothesis, which states that conflict in areas subject to amenity migration is due to the widely divergent values held by newcomers and long-time residents. Taking a heavily quantitative approach, based on extensive survey methodology, much of this work has concluded that “culture clash” is not an accurate description of the situation. Smith and Krannich published a key article in 2000 entitled “Culture Clash Revisited,” the main conclusions of which are that there are more similarities than differences between newcomers and long-time residents, and that what differences there are reverse the usual expectations. In reaching these conclusions, Smith and Krannich conflate two hypotheses – the culture clash hypothesis, described above, and the gangplank hypothesis, which says that newcomers are “particularly concerned about future growth and development ‘destroying’ the recreational, scenic, ecological, and small-town values of their destination communities” and are likely to take action to protect their values (Smith and Krannich, 2000, p. 399). They find evidence contrary to the gangplank hypothesis, which functions as a kind of straw figure in their analysis, and imply that the culture clash hypothesis is thereby weakened. I believe that the culture clash hypothesis deserves more careful consideration than they give it; first because it can manifest in other ways than as the gangplank hypothesis, and second because relative similarity on a small number of attitude measures does not mean that two groups are not embroiled in conflict that stems from cultural difference.

Let me say at the outset, though, that I see as warranted the scrutiny that Smith and Krannich and other scholars bring to the question of whether newcomers and locals have essentially conflicting...
cultural orientations. As they argue, and on this point I concur, the media fosters quick assumptions about the characteristics of the two groups. These assumptions are also evident in the interviews I conducted, though in many cases it may be more of a rhetorical tactic than a deep seated conviction. An important point then that this scholarship raises is that the roots of the conflict are more complex than is generally depicted. Newcomers and long-time residents do not fall into neatly divided cultural groups. Many characteristics may be shared across the divide of residential status.

The danger that some of this scholarship runs is to minimize the conflicts that do take place. Too often it feels like when they find minimal differences between groups on their measures, they conclude that there is no cause for conflict, ignoring the fact that conflict is an undeniable feature of the social landscape in many rural locales. Rather than starting from the fact of conflict and seeking to explain it, they start by measuring attitudes and end up finding nothing to explain. I believe this is due to the inadequacy of many of the quantitative methods used, both in terms of delineating salient groups and of capturing complex beliefs and values.

Culture cannot be reduced to expressed values measured on a Likert scale, so whether a culture clash exists cannot be positively determined by such methods alone. Of course, some ways of putting a question are much more illuminating than others. The most problematic questions are the ones which will be answered similarly by people who in fact have very different views. A measurement that asks respondents to rank the importance of increasing economic opportunities in the community (Smith and Krannich, 2000) is very general and appeals to many different sorts of people. Long-time residents and newcomers are likely to differ significantly on the types of opportunities they support, something that the survey question does not pick up. The same problem arises in other questions that ask about the importance of preserving existing community ways of life and values, and of environmental quality. These general objectives are much less controversial than the means by which society tries to achieve them. Similarly vague measurements raise questions about the results in other studies (Brennan and Cooper, 2008; McBeth and Foster, 1994, even the more sophisticated model of Jones et al., 2003). Some of these studies suffer additionally from generalizing from relatively few questions. An example of more careful work on normative stances on land use (or water allocation in this case) using
quantitative methods is Syme, Nancarrow and McCreddin (1999), though this research does not explicitly address issues of amenity migration.

Delineating groups for comparison is the other challenge faced by quantitative studies of newcomer/ long-time resident conflict. Many studies use a straight cut-off, so that long-time residents are defined as people who have lived in a community for longer than 10 years (Fortmann and Kusel, 1990) or five years (Smith and Krannich, 2000). The problem with such measures in these cases is that people who have arrived from outside and stayed in the area for long enough to be considered long-time residents according to the researchers may still hold views that resemble newer residents. Or, to use the terms I have introduced, their change in residential status may not be accompanied by a shift in cultural complex. The effect is that the presence of these people in the long-time resident group would skew the measurements of that group toward the newer residents, reducing the differences between the groups and obscuring social conflict. Brennan and Cooper (2008) take a more sophisticated approach that considers the proportion of their lives respondents spent in the locale and divides those that are not lifetime residents into quartiles. This allows them to identify a general trend of longer term residents adopting views more closely resembling lifetime residents, supporting the idea that cultural differences are most extreme when people first move to a rural area (though the concerns raised in the previous paragraph raise some questions about the reliability of these conclusions).

My contention is that two culturally distinct groups can be discerned but these groups do not map precisely onto divisions by residential status. Some people who move to Vermont may shift over time from the outlander cultural group to the local one. Some may come in and join the local cultural group immediately (see Bryan and Mares, 1983). And many stay in the outlander cultural group no matter how long they (or their children) are in Vermont. Cutting this population using a length-of-residence metric will create two groups that only crudely reflect the divisions between the cultural groups, because both constructed groups will contain people from both cultural groups.43 Note that I did say “crudely reflects divisions” – I do think that a length-of-residence metric will pull out some differences, because I think newer residents are more likely to be outlanders and the Vermont-born have a higher likelihood of being locals. But I

43 I suspect there will be fewer locals among the relatively recently arrived (though Smith and Krannich’s results for Vernal UT – one of three study locations – might suggest a location where that doesn’t hold true).
think it is worth trying to find a more careful means of delineating the fault line along which the community splits. This is a different project than trying to determine what proportion of each residential group holds given attitudes, and I think it is more relevant to the question of whether the arrival of newcomers sparks a culture clash.

The discussions of the culture clash produced by amenity migration too easily lose sight of the role culture plays in the definition or construction of identity categories. “Newcomer” and “Vermont” are tags that refer to residential history while simultaneously implying cultural traits. The actual diversity of traits found among bearers of these tags needs to be acknowledged. But we also need to understand how certain visions of groups arise and become meaningful touchstones in public debate. The construction of the “Vermont” with a carefully specified set of traits, including particular stances on land use governance, is a move loaded with political significance, due to the political legitimacy this construction confers on those stances. As Robbins et al (2009, p. 367) argue, while there is clearly evidence of differences between newcomers and long-time residents, it is the processes that “produce, maintain or erode those cultures and differences” that demand attention.

I am interested in work that does not take labels at face value but looks at the recursive play between traits and labels – how different traits determine who receives a label (i.e. “real Vermonter”), and how people who have been solidly “labelled” can intervene in the privileging of traits (Campbell, 2006). Individuals have a wide field of action open to them when taking stances on land use issues, but those actions have repercussions both for the individual and for the cultural complex itself. How those repercussions play out is highly contingent. A person’s choice to oppose a development project may be seen as a betrayal of the local cause or as a defence of the traditional landscape, and which interpretation prevails will affect that person’s place in the cultural complex and potentially even the complex’s view on land use. To understand these contingencies requires a solid sense of the various logics with which people think through the issues they confront. Each issue is amenable to a number of different interpretations, highlighting one set of circumstances and privileging one principle, or highlighting and privileging others. The way particular interpretations of issues congeal to become traits that define a social group is a complicated process. Detailing that process is at the
heart of what I am attempting to do by shifting the analysis of newcomer/Vermont conflict onto cultural terrain.

A useful starting point for a culturally based model of social division in Vermont is Paul Searls’ *Two Vermonts* (2006). The focus of this book is Gilded Era Vermont (1865-1910), during which Searls documents a struggle between two different orientations, both coming from within Vermont. This view contests the depiction of Vermont as a homogeneous society beset by outside influences. Searls identifies two distinct communities which he calls uphill and downhill, following Shalhope (1996). “Those with ‘uphill’ values were characterized by their affinity for the localized, informal, cooperative communities typical of pre-capitalist rural America. To be ‘downhill’ was to have contrary inclinations toward competitiveness, formality, contractual relationships, and comfort with the concentration of power in increasingly larger institutions” (Searls, 2006, pp. 5-6).

One of the most important issues that comes up in looking at the historical account of the uphill/downhill division is that while the divide is an enduring feature of the social landscape, the content by which the communities define themselves shifts over time, sometimes dramatically. In the Gilded Age, uphillers were the traditionalists, defending established ways of working and doing business against the “progress” that downhillers imagined the market and contractual relations would usher in. Today, the inheritors of uphill culture have a nearly opposite orientation toward the market and progress, in its industrialized guise. What is apparently a dramatic flip is messier in reality. I found that residual anti-progress views are common within the local cultural complex (i.e., uphillers), in tension with a desire to abolish regulation that restricts opportunity.

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44 “Community” is a challenging term to employ because of its range of meanings. In general, I have tried to reserve the term to designate a heterogeneous mix of people occupying the same place. When I mean communities of affinity – people linked by common interests – I either use the term “social group” or “cultural complex.” Occasionally I use the term community with a descriptor (either “local” or “outlander”) to designate these communities of affinity as well.

45 Searls (2010) notes this flip in a side comment during a talk he gave at the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington Vt. I think it is a more significant issue than his treatment of it in that talk suggests.
Searls has provided a useful framework on which to build an understanding of contemporary social dynamics in Vermont. His emphasis on culture and values resonates with my own approach. Updating his framework reveals a messiness or complexity that may be more difficult to perceive when looking only at the historical material. The shifts and reversals that took place testify to the presence of fault lines and heterogeneity within the social groups even when things look stable and settled. These can appear in differences between members of the same social group, but they can also appear as tensions within an individual’s world view. Struggles to resolve these tensions can play out in efforts to draw boundaries around groups and define what it means to be a member of them. This is the context in which rhetorical uses of “flatlander” and “real Vermonter” arise, as I discuss in more detail throughout the chapter.

The differences between two cultural groups in rural New York appear in stark contrast in a book chapter by Edward Hansen (1995). His point is to show that “woodchucks” and exurbanites pursue very different livelihood strategies and that these are tied to different political outlooks (Tocquevillians vs. Keynesians) and different social histories. He is making a similar argument to me about different cultural complexes, but painting it with much broader brush strokes. As a result, one of the things that drops out of the picture is the question of how these cultural complexes take the form that they do. Hansen takes them as a given and does not explore the blurry edges and the maintenance work that goes into solidifying these complexes. As a result he can make some remarkably bold statements about these groups (for example “a standard model woodchuck male exhibits a style best described as Proto Masculine, that is, we are speaking of a legion of hard drinking, gun toting, violent, male-bonded individuals for whom male sensitivity is not an issue” – p. 143). It should be borne in mind that Hansen’s chapter seems to be written as a think piece as part of an edited volume with the intention of provoking debate rather than laying out a carefully supported argument. For me, it is useful to have someone describing in very broad, even exaggerated, terms, cultural archetypes that circulate in communities in the Northeastern United States. Whether there is any accuracy to those archetypes is another question, so it is important to follow pieces like Hansen’s up with more careful research.

Many of the other authors I draw on offer much more nuanced views of the cultural complexes while still affirming their existence at one level or another. Boglioli (2009) addresses precisely
the practices that lead Hansen to some of his greatest flights of rhetoric, hunting culture in Vermont. His ethnographic work yields a much more complicated picture of this cultural site, in particular disputing the macho picture of local men that Hansen offers. This work is particularly valuable for its sympathetic depiction of a set of practices that to many are incomprehensible if not repugnant. The attraction of hunting camp becomes much more understandable when Boglioli describes the atmosphere that allows men in these generally single-sex environments to drop the façade that they feel they have to maintain in everyday life. He pointedly contests the notion that camps are competitive, hyper-masculine settings and offers multiple examples of the camaraderie and egalitarianism that he says prevails there. Particularly surprising for many might be his assertion that men at camp show a great propensity to admit and joke about their own faults or weaknesses, in contrast to the view that exclusively male environments are characterized by constant jockeying for position. Whatever the reality, depictions of hunting culture in the political sphere often look much more like Hansen’s, and as a result hunting can be the focus of much friction between the two cultures.

Although hunting enjoys relatively broad support in Vermont, occasional controversies do erupt. Boglioli describes the case of a coyote tournament that offered prizes for the biggest coyote shot and drew the ire of many outlanders across the state. Interestingly, this issue also highlights fractures within the local cultural complex as well because it confronted issues of the morality of the hunt, since dead coyotes were simply thrown out rather than used and because the event was organized as a competition. Boglioli notes that support or opposition to the hunt was frequently represented to the general public as an insider/outside issue, and that none of the hunters he met who opposed the hunt would actually attend a protest against it. Beliefs within the local community are clearly wide-ranging but locals are reluctant to betray the community by taking a public stance against something that is claimed to define it.

Gender and belonging are the focus of an article by Linda Bye (2009) that looks at young men in rural Norway and their performance of masculinity as a way to fit into local culture. This article is fascinating to me because its focus on gendered behaviour is so revealing about how one

46 Boglioli devotes an interesting chapter to gender in the hunting community, documenting the contradictory responses to the increasing number of women who hunt. He finds that women face subtle and less subtle exclusion but refuse to be intimidated, all the while keeping their distance from mainstream feminism.
comes to be accepted in the local community. This focus recounts the effects of actions in much more detail than most work on the social aspects of amenity migration. Bye outlines a number of key practices that are central both to representations of masculinity and to belonging to the place (i.e., being a local); these practices include hunting, snowmobiling and manual skills, especially mechanics. Surprisingly, Bye finds that paid work is less of a defining trait of rural masculinity than it seems to have been in previous generations, perhaps due to economic restructuring that left far fewer traditionally masculine jobs to be had. Leisure time activities become more central to local young men’s identities, sometimes as a way of compensating for participation in a work environment traditionally seen as feminine. Bye’s work stresses that these gender performances take place in a larger context of struggle between locals and outsiders over place and as a result many actions are read as stances reflecting rural loyalty – “If a man wants to be seen as a ‘member of the community’ it is essential that he possesses his own snowmobile, if only to demonstrate that he is on ‘the right side’ in the public debate on snowmobiling (p. 284).” Bye also looks at how individuals negotiate cultural expectations, sometimes managing to carve out alternatives that the community finds acceptable, but other times ending up beyond the pale. I see such delicate negotiations in the context of performative claims on local status, discussed more fully at the end of the chapter.

The symbolic dimension of day-to-day actions and practices is a foundation of my views on the way these cultural complexes function. How you go about your life is read by those around you as an indication of who you are, how you fit into the community and indeed, what you believe. Burton (2004) argues this powerfully in an article that uncovers the symbolic meaning attached to agricultural practices in England. He shows how a farm and its fields are taken as a display of the operator’s character. In particular, a neat and orderly appearance communicates a strong work ethic and serious commitment to farming. This has created problems for programs that seek to preserve or restore ecosystem services that farmland can provide because the weed species that play an important ecological role violate the visual order that the farmers value. Burton calls for a more serious engagement with local culture and “the language of farming” if agro-environmental initiatives are to have any hope of succeeding without antagonizing the producers. This article provides further evidence of how the practices in which one engages affect one’s standing in particular social groups within the community.
Barlett (2006) extends the ideas Burton deals with by considering their gendered dimension and by looking at how different systems of ideals compete. She looks at masculine ideals of farming and contrasts agrarian and industrial ideals. Her focus on gender allows her to distinguish an emerging third ideal, which she labels “sustainable,” wherein the relationship of the farmer and the land is much less focused on domination and the character of the farmer is not built on independence and toughness. The attention she gives to these variations helps to enrich the understanding of norms relating to agriculture and productivity in both of the cultural complexes I consider. At one level agrarian and sustainable farming ideals resemble one another, particularly in contrast to industrial models. However they are tied into different cultural complexes, which becomes apparent when gender or other cultural dimensions of farming come into focus. These differences can create a social wedge where from a technical or economic perspective one would not expect such difficulties (see discussion below about organic farming in Vermont).

Some of the work that incorporates culture into its analysis also foregrounds economic processes, spelling out the way that material interests figure into people’s positioning in society. The cultural import of work appeared already in discussions of gender and belonging above; Beverly Brown puts work in an even more central position. Brown is a scholar that is particularly sensitive to the subtleties of social dynamics in an area where amenity migration and resource extraction have an explosive history. Writing about the social and economic history of Southwest Oregon that led up to the spotted owl wars, Brown (1995) describes the breakdown of social networks that historically crossed lines of difference in rural areas, binding a community together. Social interaction in the study area is increasingly dominated by communities of affiliation – separate social worlds occupying the same geographical space. Brown’s analysis leans heavily on class as an explanatory framework for the social divisions she describes – the community of locals works in traditional blue collar jobs and increasingly in “pink-collar” (service) work while newcomers are described as white collar professionals or those living off investments. The lines that emerge in her depiction are starker than what I see in Vermont, which may be due to the particular history of the region and the intensity of the conflict that took hold there. Nevertheless many of her descriptions of processes that create social divisions in
Oregon are applicable in Vermont as well. Brown notes that the tensions that arise between communities of affiliation in one situation carry over into the next, hardening the lines that divide the groups. Environmental issues – such as the spotted owl conflict – cannot be seen in isolation from all the social issues that have pitted one community against another. This argues for an analytic approach that pays careful attention to nuances of interpretation and can follow the logical associations people make.

Walker and Fortmann provide an excellent example of work that attends to the intersection of social and political spheres in amenity landscapes. Their analysis begins with a political crisis in the local government of Nevada county, California: the implosion of NH 2020, a groundbreaking environmental planning initiative undertaken by the county government. In their effort to understand the factors that contributed to the political crisis that NH 2020 provoked, Walker and Fortmann raise the issue of in-migration and the social divisions that it produces. They base their arguments on the presumption that newcomers in general attach very different values to the landscape than long-time residents do, being drawn to the area for aesthetic or lifestyle reasons. Their analysis highlights the dynamism of the situation and the contingent factors that produce the observed outcome. The particularities of the region’s demography and geography led to the formation of a large bloc of the newcomers that played the role of a swing constituency in the political battle between environmentalists/planners and industry/real estate. This group is politically conservative but they value the landscape for its beauty and natural character. The environmentalists were initially able to mobilize the group behind a vision of careful planning to preserve the environment, but opponents of NH 2020 were subsequently able to hive them off by appealing to their ideological attachment to production, work and small government. This analysis of political dynamics foregrounds the contingency of many actors’ political stances, arguing against the practice of saddling actors with static ideological labels. The situation in Oregon is more fluid and volatile than Vermont because of the size and the ambiguous social position of the bloc of conservative newcomers. It highlights an issue that does not come through strongly in studies like Brown’s – the fact that the cultural complexes often feature significant cross-class alliances that are cemented by mutual attachment to political philosophical principles like the defence of property rights. Even more interesting is the way that political stances that characterize the local cultural complex are offered as a badge that newcomers can adopt thereby becoming more local or at least earning the goodwill of the local community. The
contingencies that Walker and Fortmann highlight are beautiful examples of the type of articulation and re-articulation that Hall (1988) describes in his study of the rise of Thatcherism.

My point in considering these two different bodies of literature on social conflict in rural areas is not to argue that all study of these issues should take an ethnographic approach. The quantitative work that I reviewed raises an important question that is not adequately addressed in the more ethnographic literature – how can we characterize the distribution of group membership? or, who belongs to which group? What the ethnographic literature brings to this question is a recognition that the way the boundaries of these groups are constructed is of critical importance. By investigating the relationship between residential status and political stance, the quantitative literature begins to open up some of the complexity of the inscription of social divisions. They turn up long-time residents whose stances line up with the newcomers and conversely newcomers with views like old-timers. This is the beginning of the story rather than the end. It suggests that social divisions are produced and maintained by mechanisms other than a simple place-defined enculturation, where one culture is loaded into people from one place and another is loaded into those from a second place. The remainder of the chapter considers some of the complexities that arise when we adopt a model of enculturation and social group formation that is more sensitive to real social interactions.

### 4.2 Cultural complexes on the ground

There are two different types of investigations that can be conducted on social divisions in Vermont, a rhetorical or discursive one and an empirical one. I am making some efforts in both directions, but I think recognizing that they are distinct is a useful step to take. Rhetorically, I am interested in how the characteristics of the local community are generalized across the whole population of Vermonter's, for what purposes and with what effects\(^{47}\). Empirically, I am interested in trying to gauge the extent of the division between the two cultures. This can be

\(^{47}\) Boglioli (2009, p. 123) provides one example of these sorts of effects, noting that the insider/outsider distinction can be seen as a rhetorical strategy to avoid acknowledging the variety of views in the insider camp.
seen to some degree in the way interview participants describe their relationships with others, particularly with those from the other culture.

4.2.1 Representations of the groups

In an exploration of the discourse of newcomers and Vermonters, an obvious place to start is with the various representations of these two groups that came up in the interviews. These representations play an important normative role – they are often fairly crude generalizations but they convey expectations about how a member of a group should act. They frequently pass judgment for specific behaviours and play a role in legitimizing stances or proposed actions.

In my interviews, participants made generalizations about newcomers much more than they did about Vermonters. This is due to an asymmetry which I discuss in more depth below, specifically many newcomers seek acceptance into the communities where they have moved, but many Vermonters feel less need or desire to cultivate good relationships with newcomers (unless they are compelled to for livelihood reasons).

Newcomers play the unenviable role of foil. They are an easy target. They arrive in Vermont unsuspecting of the deep social divides that await them, having been fed copious promotional materials, expecting a rural idyll. Vermonters, on the other hand, have been playing this game for generations. They have the arguments down pat, arguments whose very circulation makes up a part of local culture. Each time a newcomer arrives and puts a house up in the middle of a field, or rings their property with “no trespassing” signs, unaware that he is following in a long line of just such behaviours, Vermonters nod their heads knowingly and add the best examples to the list of anecdotes that make the rounds.

So what are the newcomers faulted for? First off, Vermonters express resentment for their wealth, and more specifically for the capacity that it provides newcomers to make significant changes in the landscape and community, changes that many Vermonters can only dream of. The impacts of their wealth are far-reaching, as explored further in the section “Residential Development” in the following chapter – their ability and willingness to pay large sums for land and housing drives up the cost of both of these commodities. Barnard expresses this concern succinctly: “We’re all complaining about flatlanders, but they’re the only ones that can come up
here and afford to build.” Carleton’s take adds an additional nuance, “We have the newly rich coming in from the cities who are just enthralled with the possibility of owning land.” The implication in this comment is that newcomers do not have very profound reasons for buying land; it comes off as a status issue, in contrast to the Vermonters for whom land is an integral component of their livelihoods. This association of newcomers with wealth is remarkably consistent, perhaps because the wealthy newcomers are the most visible ones, the ones who create the most waves (some of which are positive, in the form of employment opportunities).

Wealth in itself is not necessarily held in low esteem, in fact many of the Vermonters interviewed were ardent supporters of the opportunity that capitalism holds out for people to pursue wealth (a component of a Government Sceptic orientation). But certain attitudes or behaviours that often come with wealth raise the ire of some interview participants. One common concern is that newcomers are often inconsiderate of the rest of the community. Marquette describes the situation: “All of these out-of-staters are coming up and buying up the land. Build what they want and to hell with the rest of the people.” He’d like to see more thought going in to keeping meadows intact rather than turning into building sites. A related charge came up repeatedly, and not just among Vermonters or Government Sceptics, pointing out the hypocrisy that is involved in coming to Vermont, moving into a new home, and then vigorously pursuing regulatory changes that would limit further development. This is a common enough occurrence to earn its own moniker – “last one in, shut the gate.” Carleton describes some of his neighbours at a local development review – “They didn’t want any more houses because they didn’t want to look at them. A fairly selfish point of view, I thought, but they’re entitled to their point of view. They all want to be the last person allowed to settle here.” Carleton’s representation of newcomers not only calls them selfish, but subtly undermines the rationale for their action by framing it as a purely aesthetic motive (and moreover using wording that makes aesthetic concerns seem even more selfish than they often are represented as being: “they didn’t want to look at them”).

Selfishness is one side of insensitivity; another side stems from ignorance. The majority of my interviews included remarks of one kind or another discussing the minimal understanding most urbanite newcomers have of rural life. Of course, Vermont’s rural character is what makes it attractive to a lot of these people, but the image and the reality are often quite far apart, a point
that Arsenault makes over and over again in his interview. What is often missing from newcomers’ views of the landscape is the work that produces it (McCandless 2008). Drawing on information from other sources, particularly environmental organizations, newcomers are said to have a strongly preservationist view of nature, imagining that nature is better off if humans just leave it alone. In extreme cases this can manifest as a failure to realize that the pastoral landscape will grow up to forest if all human intervention ceased. Also missing from their awareness is the degree to which local livelihoods depend on the land.

The last major charge that I’ll deal with here focuses on one aspect of newcomers’ role as agents of transformation. The charge is that newcomers come to Vermont to escape the city but invariably end up bringing the city with them. They think they want a rustic life, but once they arrive, they discover that they miss all the accoutrements of urban living. They then set about reforming their adopted towns to provide these urban amenities. Daniels sees this especially clearly in arguments that take place in his tourist hometown: “People in [this town] are all about business. ‘We need to furnish sidewalks for our guests’ – I hear that at town meeting. Come on! If they come to [this town], to Vermont, maybe we don’t have sidewalks. Maybe that’s why they come to Vermont, because there aren’t sidewalks. Let’s not make sidewalks; they can walk in the woods. Or don’t come.” Similar charges come up around forms of government as well as around material changes – zoning and other highly regulatory approaches to governing land use are framed as urban models that don’t belong in Vermont.

Locals often propagate critical representations of newcomers as part of an effort to delegitimize their presence. By contrast, representations of Vermonters often play the opposite role, positioning them as the legitimate residents and authorities on land use. Whereas newcomers are represented as having values and advocating positions that do not reflect an understanding of the working landscape, Vermonters are said to have “common sense,” meaning they are able to find the appropriate balance between environmental, social and economic needs. Laraway talks about a complaint that the authorities received over an outdoor storage facility owned by her company. An official contacted her and told her that “one person had complained about an [object that was falling] into the river, and if I could have bet on it, I bet you more than anything, it was either someone that had either recently moved into the area, or someone that definitely was not a
Vermonter” (her emphasis). As she represents the issue, the newcomer is putting an inappropriately heavy emphasis on environmental issues. She does not see the object as causing undue harm to the river, in fact she sees the river as being the problem, seeing as how she is steadily losing land to it. From this and other comments she makes, she seems to feel that the government should be taking action to stabilize the river (using rip-rap or other engineering interventions) rather than pursuing her over pollution. Her comment that only someone who wasn’t a Vermonter would complain about the situation is a strong claim that all Vermonters share a set of values and a pragmatic orientation toward land-use practices.

In conducting the interviews, I frequently encountered the idea that Vermonters as a group have a consistent political sensibility. This idea is often expressed using some variation of the first person plural – a somewhat ambiguous “we” who all feel a certain way. Angela Morton is a bit more specific in who she means – the “town people” – when she talks about the political battle over introducing zoning to her town. “It wasn’t the town people that really wanted it,” she says. “It was an influence of others moving into the town.” Laraway also makes use of an ambiguous “we” when she discusses the issue of zoning. “They want to restrict and they want to have control over what you do with your land. Which doesn’t necessarily affect me a whole lot, but it could down the road. I can see a need for some zoning but [small laugh] sometimes it’s too much – I mean, that’s why we live in Vermont, so we can do what we want.” This is a riff on a common jokey saying – “I’m from Vermont and I do what I want.” This saying, and Laraway’s paraphrasing even more, constructs Vermont as the land of individual liberty and freedom from such governmental constraints as zoning.

This idea that Vermonters have a consistent political sensibility affects how people are perceived and categorized in their interactions with others. One participant, a newcomer to the state, describes his wife’s experience in settings where politics come up, such as at town meeting. People do not think she’s a Vermonter because she’s very politically active, in a radical manner associated with left-wing newcomers (a significant population in the state). In reality, she comes from a family with impeccable local credentials – a large extended family, many of whom are, in the words of the participant, “hard core woodchucks,” including a brother who is an “archetypical logger.”
Opinions that identify negative aspects of the community of Vermonters are somewhat rare, perhaps because many newcomers hope to find a welcome in that community and are reluctant to criticize them. Lines was one person who was willing to discuss some of the frustrations he has had in dealing with long-time residents of his town. He describes a community that can be closed off to many ideas that new people bring in, a sort of knee-jerk rejection of anything from the outside. Many of the civic institutions that are new to his town are the initiative of newcomers – institutions such as recreation committees, library boards and farmers’ markets. He notes that certain families resist these changes and wonders what the obstacle is that prevents their involvement. “Is it a social thing? Is it an economic thing? You know, some of the local folks are as wealthy or more wealthy than a lot of us. So it’s not necessarily economic. Is it education? Is it just visibility to the world around us, or is it just because they’ve been here a long, long time?” Although Lines frames this as a question about participation in civic institutions, it serves equally well as a broader question about social relations in Vermont more generally. He is diagnosing a social division that manifests as a low-level hostility to initiatives and ideas coming from across the divide, while also trying to understand what is at the root of this division. He rules out class – in the sense of personal wealth – then raises other possibilities without settling on whether they play a role or not: education, “visibility” to the outside world, and length of residence (in terms that sound ancestral rather than individual). The difficulty he has pinpointing the source of the social division reflects the debate that academics are still having over the importance of residential status in rural social dynamics.

4.2.2 Experiences of social conflict
Looking empirically at the question of social division involves consideration of participants’ experiences of social relations. This differs from much of what I have looked at so far in this section, in that the focus has been on representations of others. Now I want to shift the focus to emphasize concrete experiences. These experiences cannot be cleanly extricated from

48 To the extent that newcomers perceived me as sympathetic to/ defensive of Vermonters, they may have held back in their criticisms, but I tried to maintain a neutral, open attitude.
representations of others, of course. Many of the representations are generalized from the kinds of experiences I will be focusing on now.

Social distance is a recurrent theme in the interviews of many of the Vermonters. The discussion of newcomers’ ignorance above is relevant to this issue; by saying that newcomers have little understanding of rural livelihoods and ways of life, participants are also highlighting the fact that there is often little social interaction, which – had it occurred – would ultimately have led to a reduction in ignorance. Richard LaChance articulates this most forcefully: “If someone is living here and they’ve never been exposed to rural economies and say they don’t make their living from rural economies, say they have a home office and they do everything with computers and the internet, [then] they don’t know that there’s a place in [this town], Vermont that buys logs and makes lumber. They have no idea anything like this goes on. I’ve talked to lots of people that haven’t a clue that anything like this is going on. It’s like this underground economy.” This lack of understanding of rural livelihoods has concrete ramifications for land use and local livelihoods. Interview participants describe encounters with newcomer landowners who make significant changes to the management of the land, often by limiting access to the land for uses such as hunting and fishing or by choosing to discontinue active forestry and agricultural practices on their land. The realtors I interviewed in particular had a lot of contact with people who often had a very vague idea of what rural living would be like and brought their “New Jersey sensibilities” with them.

The extract from Carleton’s interview cited above, where he talks about the newly rich coming to Vermont, enthralled with the idea of landownership, continues with a discussion of the preservationist mindset of these newcomers “They don’t have any connection with the land. They don’t have any history of the working landscape, of earning money from annual crops or periodic timber harvest or anything, and they’ve been taught in the conventional system that to cut a tree is to kill wildlife, is to ruin good land, is just bad. You shouldn’t be doing that. You just gotta quit it.” This is a fairly polemical depiction of newcomers that paints all the “newly rich” urbanites with the same broad brush. There is always a question of how well the anecdotal
evidence represents the general type, however variations of this charge come up frequently enough in the interviews of a range of participants to suggest that there is some basis for it.\footnote{It is worth noting that a lot of new land owners are eager to fit into the community and seek guidance from long-time residents about appropriate practices (see Robbins et al. 2009). None of the newcomers that I interviewed had as simplistic an outlook as Carleton describes, but I admit that my sample is probably skewed toward people who are more knowledgeable than average about land use issues.}

Social distance can also manifest as a failure to comprehend the interests and values of the other group. This can easily translate into political tensions as policies are debated that have significant impacts on the landscape and the livelihoods that depend on it. Arsenault describes the feeling of being politically marginalized when newcomers with different ideas about the land move into the area: “You become kind of like a minority as time goes by with those people who are farmers and loggers compared to the number of people who either move in or people in general who are losing that connection with the land, and if you stand up to say something, it’s likely that most other people won’t agree with you, so you are kind of a minority and even though what you may think or the proposals that you may come up with - you are basically a minority, and it’s very difficult, kind of like there’s a power struggle there.” The impression that Arsenault conveys is of an embattled community slowly losing control to the ever-increasing pool of outlanders who don’t understand what the loggers and farmers face on a day to day basis. In Arsenault’s description, the political disagreement stems from the general population’s loss of connection to the land, which strongly implies a lack of understanding that would arise where little social contact takes place. The way Arsenault frames this problem underlines the fact that this is more than a newcomer/Vermont issue; he doesn’t just put the blame on people moving in, he broadens his statement to include “people in general” who share the problematic characteristic of being unconnected to the land. The lack of understanding and lack of agreement that concerns Arsenault is much more a product of differing concrete practices and culture than of simple residential categories.

No interview conveyed the sense of social distance in Vermont more viscerally than the Tremblays’ did. They painted the picture of a rural underclass squeezed tighter and tighter from all sides, by government regulation, corruption and shady dealing, cut-throat competition, free trade, and the influx of wealthy newcomers able to afford what the Vermonters can’t. According
to the Tremblays many of the Vermonters capitalize on the social distance by preying on naive newcomers, for example by misrepresenting the quantity and value of timber on a parcel of land and paying a fraction of what it’s worth. Others do not have such ready access to easy pickings and are forced into a variety of other illegal activities, such as burglary and small scale marijuana cultivation. In Dennis Tremblay’s view, the primary divide is between the haves and the have-nots; the tensions he describes are born of desperation, which he eerily predicted (in December 2007) would only become worse as the result of an economic meltdown that was inevitable — “it ain’t gonna be long – I say a year.” He described simmering anger over environmental activism, in particular a Greenpeace-style sabotaging of logging equipment, that fed into the clandestine formation of a local militia. Tremblay’s depiction is disturbing and much more extreme than other interviews. But my interview sample was small and it is entirely conceivable that I only found one couple with connections to this underclass, a broad perspective on its significance, and a willingness to speak candidly about it. Moreover, Tremblay’s stories were richly detailed, full of names and specific events that went far beyond vague hearsay and convincingly gave a picture of a man with his finger on the pulse of one of the local communities. This impression was in keeping with the employment history he related for me, that of a consummate entrepreneur, with his finger in pies all over northern Vermont.

The Tremblays convey the volatile yet also tightly enmeshed relationship between a class of struggling Vermonters and a class of wealthy urbanite newcomers. The newcomers represent one of the most significant sources of money for the Vermonters, whether acquired above-board or through subterfuge. Much of the work that allows the newcomers’ lives to approach their rural idylls is performed by the people the Tremblays know so intimately. Building houses, putting in power lines, cutting woodlots, painting barns, mowing lawns, cleaning cottages or caretaking vacation homes — all of these are means by which the Tremblays and their acquaintances draw off some of the massive financial resources that have settled into Vermont. But the money to be earned from this work also brings with it frustrations. One of these is being in constant contact with people who don’t understand your way of life and don’t value things that are important to you. Elaine Tremblay quietly voices her disbelief at some of the preferences that she encounters at work in the homes of these newcomers: “That’s what made me so upset with the people that I work for […]. They live in New Jersey and her comment was ‘Oh, it’s so beautiful here, but I don’t know why they had to build that barn. I can see the roof.’ Upset
because she could see the roof of a barn!” For Elaine a barn is one of the cornerstones of the community, representing the means to make a living. To treat it as just one more element in a view, and especially as an element that mars a view, shows incredible insensitivity to the people living in the town and the culture of work that they have sustained over generations.

Others also convey the constraints that the class relationship places on interactions with newcomers. Marquette describes newcomers as “pain-in-the-asses,” and gives the example of how over-protective they are of their property. He chalks this up to “an attitude of their own that they bring down with them. They stick to it. You can’t really compromise with out-of-staters. I’ve tried that many times. It just don’t work.” When I asked him if he had “run-ins” with out of staters (an admittedly vague term, which I think he took to mean as open conflict), he responded, “No, no. No. Because in my line of work you’ve pretty much got to please the people, you know. You’ve got to be really pleasing to the public. We did this job in [another town] – I don’t know how many times we moved this mailbox because this lady didn’t like it. You could move it 20 times and it still ain’t gonna be right.” Having to be “pleasing” to people who you regard as “pain-in-the-asses” is bound to produce tension, a tension that is characteristic of service work, particularly when the class divide is deep enough that the clients are oblivious to the realities of the people who are working for them.

Working with the land leads to particular understandings and commitments that are different from those urbanite newcomers hold. When these different perspectives confront each other in the context of a service relationship, the person seeking employment has to be careful not to offend the sensibilities of his or her employer. One of the big areas of misunderstanding is the broader impacts of various farming or logging practices. Locals often feel that newcomers are too focused on individual incidents and miss the bigger picture. For example, newcomers are emotionally affected by the death of an animal and don’t see beyond that individual death to how it fits into the functioning of a larger system that sustains a whole population, including even the newcomers to some extent. Carleton in particular takes aim at animal rights advocates and other radical environmentalists for this narrow vision, though in the process he glosses over some of the other motives behind concern for animal welfare.

Arsenault provides a more nuanced perspective on what someone who derives his livelihood from the land faces as he interacts with clients. Throughout his interview he returns to the
contrast between fantasy and reality. For him much of the representations of Vermont’s bucolic landscape and solid traditions are fantasies, some consciously manipulated for economic gain and others simply the product of individual desire. Behind the fantasy, things look quite different. “If you go and be on a true working farm for a day, there’s things that you see or do that are very real that – I don’t want to say would appal people but certainly they’d get not only a better appreciation but it would ground them a lot more than – I always go back to the fantasy. People think one thing and I guarantee you, it’s not like that.” The expression Arsenault uses – “very real” – to describe life on the farm seems vague at first glance, but the meaning becomes clear the more he speaks. It conveys a sense of unpleasantness mastered out of necessity, which figures hugely in a pragmatism that is one of the hallmarks of local Vermont culture. This mastery involves careful work on one’s emotions, something that many newcomers have not had to do. “Where people have a lot of emotional issues toward farming or forestry, you almost take that emotional aspect out. Or part of it anyway, obviously there’s still emotions but the work itself, the environment that you do the work in and the things you have to deal with, it’s just – I don’t know.” At a loss for words to describe his experience, Arsenault turns to a concrete example. “It’s in the summertime, you cut a tree down, you’re limbing it up and then you come across a nest that had birds in it. Well, it’s not something that you just go and tell people about, you know, for those who don’t have a connection are going to go ‘Oh my God! How horrible!’ And it’s not pleasant, I don’t want to say that it’s part of the package. But that is very real. There’s not much you can do about it. I’m not saying that you have to learn to accept but those – just something like that, it isn’t that big of a deal. Or I don’t think it is anyway, but you still kind of, it a– it doesn’t affect you but – I don’t know. It’s just kind of like a reality that somebody again that has never worked in the woods, if they were following behind you would be absolutely appalled.” The mastery over emotion is painted so vividly in this extract. In the course of the interview Arsenault emerged as a person with deep love and empathy for the natural world. In large part that love is what keeps him working on the land. At the same time, that work also puts him in situations that are emotionally difficult. Arsenault does not have the luxury of letting himself be led by his emotions however. And in this he is different from the outlanders he turns to for employment. Because the outlanders do not have the same relationship with the emotions the land brings up for them, Arsenault has to manage his representations. As he says, “If I’m cutting on somebody’s land and I don’t know what it is that might happen, you
don’t want other people to know because again it’s not basically acceptable in society today and I don’t want the next door neighbour to catch wind of it because I’m hoping that maybe he’ll hire me to maybe do some logging on their property. I don’t want them hearing that the woodpecker nest... I don’t know. But sometimes it doesn’t take much for people to be very, kind of like taken aback by some of the things that happen through the work you do.”

I want to highlight the comment that certain impacts of working the land are not acceptable in society today. This ties in to the quote from Arsenault’s interview that appeared earlier in the chapter where he describes people who work the land as being a marginalized minority. Essentially Arsenault sees decisions about land use being made by people with little experience of the land, on the basis of what he calls a fantasy. But at the same time he is constrained from confronting the fantasy by the fact that he is economically dependent on these people. Whereas in the past, you could count on people who hired you to have an understanding of what the impacts of your work would be and how that fit into the larger picture of a rural economy, now people like Arsenault have to cushion the sensibilities of their employers, in effect pumping up the fantasy. People working the land have to start concealing what their work involves to avoid having issues blown out of proportion. “It’s like those unspoken realities that nobody talks- ‘we don’t talk about this stuff’ kind of deal. But that’s stuff that happens, and it happens every day. And it seems so much now that you have to be careful- ah, I don’t want to bring that up either – it’s almost kind of like political who you can talk to about those things, how you can talk about them, and probably the best thing to do is just shut up.” As Arsenault and other workers are concealing what could be upsetting realities from outlanders, they are also identifying people with whom it is “safe” to bring up such issues. This gives another meaning to the idea of an underground economy that LaChance brought up. For LaChance the logging economy was underground because a lot of people were unaware that it existed. In Arsenault’s interview, a picture emerges of a community that keeps the realities of their work hidden from the outside world because of hostility and misunderstanding. It’s very much political who you talk to about these things; you have to seek out like-minded people or else risk giving ammunition to those who want to refashion your landscape and your livelihood. In this way, talk and other social interactions follow the lines laid out by political stances. The result is a cultural complex that incorporates work, social interactions and normative positions, all of which are distinct from the cultural complex across the social divide from it.
The division between these cultural complexes is deepened by the way different components of it reinforce each other. Work sets up certain interests and understandings of land use and leads to commitments to certain political stances. These all affect who you feel you can speak openly to, channelling social interaction to similarly positioned people. Addressing only one of these components is likely to have only limited effect on the social division, unless those efforts spill over and start to affect other components as well.

Strained or absent social interaction is the most apparent component of the social divide and the one that people gravitate toward first in their efforts to bridge the gap. Such efforts can be quite meaningful; similarly their absence can be deeply felt. Marquette professes not to be bothered by people buying winter or vacation homes, “but you don’t have to be snobby about it. Be polite, you know. I could be your neighbour some day.” Taken together with his experience at the hands of some out-of-state clients, this comment foregrounds the smallness of the communities that newcomers are moving into and the fact that social relations in such communities are seldom one-dimensional. How you treat an employee can come back to haunt you in a small town in a way that is quite different from urban areas.

Some newcomers are quite aware of these differences and marvel at the networks that they can tap into relatively easily when they are looking for someone to grade a lawn or build a stone wall. Such arrangements are often the first contacts that newcomers make across a social divide that they may be only dimly aware of. Sometimes these arrangements go well and are mutually beneficial, sometimes, as the Tremblays testify, this is less true. The Konigs have had some of both kinds of experiences in the years they have been coming to Vermont, though most of the interactions have been positive from their perspective. Standing out from among these is the relationship they have developed with the Sawyer family who live down the road from them. Marianne Konig clearly appreciates this relationship enormously: “Well, it’s just so different than anything I’ve known. I go down there and there’s a warm greeting and in the winter there’s warmth by the stove. Our son played with their children as Arthur said, and we’d go down to get him and the mittens would all be hung up over the stove, and it was a wonderful experience.”

Warmth is meaningful here, conveying the sense of acceptance that many newcomers seek when they first move to Vermont. Lines, who earlier started to lay out the dimensions of the social
divide, is equally aware of the “ice” that locals sometimes greet newcomers with, remarking that it’s a phenomenon that’s not limited to Vermont. Ice can manifest in such seemingly minor choices as not returning a wave when passing someone on a dirt road or not acknowledging someone who has just entered a store or garage. The other end of the spectrum is welcoming someone into your home while your children play together. The importance of this kind of acceptance is difficult to overstate; it goes a long way to overcome the ice that newcomers invariably meet elsewhere. Since one of Vermont’s most attractive features for newcomers is its strong sense of community, the desire to be included in it is intense. It comes up repeatedly in the interviews with newcomers, not usually as an explicitly expressed desire, but as cherished memories of acceptance. Alternatively it comes through in the effort to avoid being saddled with the label “flatlander.”

The snobby attitude that Marquette feels too many newcomers bring with them is just one of the ways that attitude can feed into the social divide. Newcomers with attitudes that differ from the stereotype find a warmer reception than the ice that Lines describes. Keller says that she’s never felt unwanted in the twenty years that she’s lived in Vermont but she chalks that up to the fact that she is from a rural background and has interests in a lot of “traditional” things. “I think there is still conflict between people who are from here and people who are from away, but I think a lot of it depends on – when you come from away – how you come in, and what you bring with you for attitudes.” While she feels her rural background and interests have smoothed her entry, she is also aware that her politics do not quite fit with the local community, “By the same token, I’m sure that I am looked as still- because I’m not- There are a lot of local folks that believe strongly in individual rights and their own private property rights and that no one should tell them what to do with their property in any direction. And I really struggle with that because I think that if you are the one paying the taxes, you should have those rights. On the other hand there’s the part of me that also looks at sort of communal good and how to balance that, and I don’t know what the answer is yet [laughs].” The local cultural complex that Keller feels quite close to for the most part also includes a set of political stances that Keller feels ambivalent towards. The fact that she brings up political stances in her discussion of feeling welcome in the community is significant. It shows that they play an important role in defining community boundaries. Keller’s integration into the community has only gone so far, she seems to be saying,
because she can not fully embrace the property rights politics that are a central characteristic of the local cultural complex.

It is difficult to evaluate people’s claims of feeling welcome when they put a lot of stake in being accepted. To admit to feeling unwelcome could mean that you haven’t succeeded in being accepted by the community. Lines was one of the few newcomers who admitted to having occasional difficulties. Other newcomers downplayed the tension between newcomers and Vermonters, much more than Vermonters did. An interesting case is the Konigs who tend to emphasize the distinction between part time residents and year round residents in their discussion of social divides in the town. This subtly suggests that newcomers who commit to living in Vermont full time can cross the social divide, a belief that stems from a view of Vermont’s society is essentially harmonious. Speaking about their neighbourhood, Arthur Konig comments that “there is a nice mix of people. Certainly it’s not like [other parts of town], where there are very rich people. Though we do have some very rich neighbours here. But it’s a very easy mix between the people who are here year round and those of us who have been here just part time. We socialize together.” Konig may be using “people who are here year round” as a euphemism for Vermonters or locals, but what is interesting about that choice of words is that it lumps together what most people who have lived in Vermont a while would identify as quite distinct groups – newcomers and Vermonters.

Socializing is something that people work at. This is a point worth stressing because too many cultural reference points represent socializing as a frivolous, fun-loving pursuit. Successful socializing is one of the keys to acceptance in the community; the easy mix that the Konigs claim to achieve does not just happen of its own accord. Marianne Konig takes some credit for it: “I’ve worked at it too. Not just the boys playing but you know having people up. And then in the summer, there are all the summer people, whom we also know. And that is different because some of those just aren’t interested in friends like we’ve made here.” Arthur chimes in, “We’ve often enjoyed however mixing them together – at certain kinds of events.” And Marianne continues, “There’s a certain rebelliousness when we put them together and see what happens [laughs].” They make sure that I realize that they don’t take their roles as hosts lightly in purposefully making people uncomfortable. They portray themselves as a couple who aren’t as bound by convention as some of the part time residents, a couple who aren’t prone to class
prejudices. They seem proud of their friendships with Vermonters, including people whom they have employed in the past, and proud of their ability to achieve an “easy mix” at their parties. I would be a naïve researcher to take their claims about the easy mix at their parties as representing social harmony in the community more broadly. The reason the mix can work is that there is a process of selection; some Vermonters fit in well enough with the newcomer guests that they too receive invitations. But there are others whom the Konigs would likely never think of inviting. Some of these come up in the interview – the “bad farmer” down the road, the bear hunters from the next town over. They also describe their local political opponents who are always voting against education spending and other public services, and it seems that their knowledge of them is not from face to face social interaction. This suggests to me that the social mixing and harmony that the Konigs describe only reaches some of the Vermonters in town, while many others remain on the other side of the social divide.

At the same time, I do not want to discount the cross-cultural encounters that they have experienced, nor the impacts they have had on the thinking of both sides. Their close relationship with the Sawyers over the years has shifted Steve Sawyer’s outlook on the world, in particular giving him a greater appreciation of education and helping open doors for his children to pursue advanced degrees. Conversely, the Konigs have acquired some local views about land use; for example Arthur is proud of his productive management of their woodlands, which he contrasts with the strict preservationist approach of environmentalist landowners like the Nature Conservancy. This challenges the representation we saw earlier of newcomers as knee-jerk preservationists.

### 4.2.3 Honorary locals and outlander Vermonters

These examples lead to the consideration of two important types that confound the conventional wisdom of the divide between newcomers and Vermonters. On one hand are the Vermonters whose values, stances or practices align more closely with stereotypical newcomers than with their own community; we can call these people outlander Vermonters. On the other hand are newcomers who embrace aspects of the local cultural complex and have found some acceptance among Vermont’s locals, people who I will call honorary locals. Another way of thinking about
these two types are as the places where the residential dichotomy “newcomer/Vermonter” does not line up with the cultural dichotomy “outlander/local.” These are cases of people who mix traits from the two cultural complexes and have often developed some ability to move back and forth across the social divide.

The Konigs evidence a few areas where they have begun to take on characteristics of local culture, but they are still in an early phase of assimilation, if I can use such teleological terminology. I turn to the Chisholms to provide an example of much more extensive assimilation into local culture. The Chisholms stand out for the enthusiasm with which they have worked to integrate themselves into the local community by learning skills and practices common in rural culture. In addition to purchasing livestock to keep on their property, the Chisholms have immersed themselves in forestry pursuits. They have taken a number of classes at the vocational school on woodworking and have gotten to be on friendly terms with the county forester. But most impressively, they have bought a portable sawmill and are busy putting up outbuildings with the lumber they have produced. This embrace of traditional rural livelihoods is not motivated by economics as much as by a desire for a rural experience. While an experience-driven motive like this could in some cases be characterized as self-involved, in the Chisholms’ case it has provided an opportunity to connect with and understand their neighbours. The Chisholms have developed a deep appreciation of the challenges and values of working the land, making them much more sympathetic to local perspectives than a typical newcomer would be, though admittedly with a different perspective on opportunities because of their economic position. From their interview it is clear that their efforts to understand local ways have smoothed their entry into the community considerably by fostering a degree of goodwill among locals. A potential feud with a neighbour who was used to driving his ATV across their land seems to have died down because, according to Stan Chisholm, the neighbour can see that they are “trying to do something with the land.” This stands in stark contrast to a lot of the newcomers who never actually learn how to cut a tree down, much less run a portable mill. And it’s worlds apart from those who do not want to see any logging activity on their land at all and who post their land against trespassing.

From my interviews with locals as well, there is evidence that these kinds of efforts are appreciated. Laraway describes a neighbouring couple who resemble the Chisholms in many
respects. When she first moved to her present home she was annoyed to find that she was surrounded by newcomers and didn’t expect to like it. But having gotten to know the Hopkins, she changed her mind. She calls them “awesome” and says she is so thankful to have them as neighbours. Going on she says, “If anything, they want to be Vermonters probably more than a lot of Vermonters. They’ll do anything they can to do things themselves, and I think that’s the way Vermonters used to be, and I guess that’s the way I am. I try to be as self-sufficient and independent as possible.” These comments give an indication of what it takes to be accepted into the community of locals as something like an honorary member. They show how important conformance to a specific set of traditional ideals is, in this case self-sufficiency and independence.

The Chisholms have drawn closer to the local community by learning traditional practices. Practices are not easily separable from values or political stances, so their embrace of these practices can be read at another level as well. In particular, the fact that the Chisholms learned practices relating to the forest industry may have a bearing on their acceptance into local culture. Various practices, even if they are all broadly “traditional,” are not all viewed the same way. One of the things that came up in my interviews was a significant degree of hostility that people connected to forest work felt towards farmers. LaChance expressed a surprising amount of resentment toward the public’s love affair with farmers, and the government assistance that translates into. The Tremblays were even more vehement about it. Even Laraway, who doesn’t have close ties with the forest industry, showed some decidedly anti-farmer sentiment. To some degree farmers have also been associated with a certain respectability that not all locals could attain even if they wanted to, given the requirements of land ownership (Campbell 2006). Forest practices are more strongly associated with locals than agricultural practices are, in large part because many of the outlander newcomers have taken an active interest in farming. Forestry, by contrast, remains largely the preserve of locals.50

The wave of newcomers that came to Vermont in the 1960s and ’70s included many hippies who relocated from urban areas in order to get “back to the land.” Simultaneously the environmental movement was raising a serious challenge to industrial agricultural practices. The combination

50 This may be due in part to greater danger associated with woods work which discourages amateurs in a way that farming does not. Similarly the equipment can be an barrier for those unused to working with it.
of these phenomena resulted in a flourishing organic agriculture scene in Vermont. Norton
Goodman is exaggerating somewhat when he says that if the hippies hadn’t moved in there
wouldn’t be any farmers left in Vermont, but his comment does convey something of the impact
that this movement had on agriculture in the state. If anything, the scene is even stronger now
than it was at the height of the hippie movement, with organic farmers becoming more business
minded and their products more sought-after by the mainstream (Hewitt, 2009). This section of
the agricultural community in Vermont is interestingly positioned with respect to the local/
outlander divide. On one hand, newcomers who started up organic farms share local values of
working the land. They display many of the qualities of hard work and independence that locals
like Laraway set such stake in. On the other hand, the philosophy that motivates them draws
very heavily from environmentalism and an ordering of priorities that is quite different from the
pragmatic anthropocentrism that traditionally held in local agricultural circles. The two
approaches to agriculture have been at loggerheads over various issues in recent decades, most
recently over the use of biotechnology. These flare-ups have driven a wedge between organic
agriculture advocates and the local community (in my narrow sense), who have rallied behind
conventional farmers. Marilyn Collins is from an old Vermont farming family but with her
husband and children, she’s switched their farm over to organic methods. She describes the old
methods as pushing your livestock and your land to get as much as you can out of them with
little foresight into what the long-term effects are. She says there’s a whole sector of Vermont’s
agriculture that’s still in that mode, while the new methods are asking how you can build a
system that will truly sustain the land and the animals. Collins describes the conventional sector
as saying “‘Look, the population has grown so much that we have to have these practices or
we’re not going to be able to feed the world’ and [the organic sector] says, ‘You keep going that
way, and we’re not going to have land left or the soils left to produce any kind of nutritional food
for people anyway.’ So I think there’s very much a conflict around that.”

The forest products industry has not seen anywhere near the degree of change that the agriculture
sector has seen with the appearance of the organic movement. While there is definitely much
more awareness of sustainable forest management across the board, the large scale social shift
that is such a striking characteristic of organic agriculture has no counterpart in the forest
products industry\textsuperscript{51}. In this sense, it is fair to say that the forest products sector is the preserve of local culture to a much greater extent than agriculture is. This is the reason that I attribute so much significance to the Chisholms’ efforts to learn to fell trees and mill lumber. This is a much more unusual choice than starting an organic vegetable farm would be, one which brings them into much closer contact with local culture, and one which commands a certain degree of respect from that culture as a result. The practices they are learning signify a number of important things including an openness to a work environment that is defined as the province of locals and an embrace of forest production, with its emphasis on human use, instead of a focus on the forest as nature. The values and practices associated with forestry contribute to the Chisholm’s position as honorary locals.

I use the term “honorary local” to highlight the importance that acceptance by other locals plays in attaining this position in the community. The centrality of acceptance in the definition leads to a certain circularity that makes this dichotomy between locals and outlanders slippery (c.f. Valentine 2007 on identity and acceptance into Deaf culture). As someone who isn’t part of the everyday workings of the community, I cannot say with certainty who qualifies as a local and who doesn’t. In fact, even insiders cannot say such a thing with certainty, instead they can make \textit{claims} about others’ status. These claims are seldom explicit in the sense of saying that a person is a real Vermonter and therefore has authority on the issue under discussion (see Campbell 2000 for a similar argument on masculinity). Instead they are more likely to operate subtly, for instance in complaints about flatlanders that discredit their stances by focusing on their residential status.

\textbf{4.2.4 Acquiring local status}

One of the reasons residential status has such weight is the trope of invasion and displacement that is a frequent feature of discussions of exurban development. There is widespread sympathy for the view that a person has a powerful right to the place that they are from. By contrast, a person arriving from elsewhere has far less ethical clout. This is particularly true when the

\textsuperscript{51} That is starting to change with recent work by organizations like Vermont Family Forests and the Forest Conservation Roundtable hosted by Vermont Natural Resources Council.
newcomer has a lot of wealth, power or choice. In this way class gets layered onto residential status, adding to legitimacy at one end of the spectrum and taking it away at the other. In the battle over legitimacy that the cultural complexes wage for their respective political visions, each complex strives to marshal enough supporters with good Vermont credentials to be able to say that it represents Vermonters. Each wants to give their agenda the power of association with Vermonters and the common folk.

When a person expresses a political stance, such as support or opposition for zoning, their words are received with an overlay that positions them in the community and either gives them weight or saps their force. The clearest evidence for this is in formal expressions of a political stance (e.g., letters to the editor, testimony before the legislature or other government body) where people make explicit efforts to build their credibility. Frequently those efforts boil down to how long they have lived in the state, either wearing it as a badge of honour, or – if the credential isn’t impressive – soft-peddling it and trying to substitute another claim.\(^{52}\)

In the pursuit of legitimacy, local culture and outlander culture are differently positioned and have different goals. Local culture tries to argue that it is the only real representative of Vermonters’ values and politics. Outlander culture cannot make such a claim; it is patently obvious that a substantial number of Vermonters oppose outlander culture. Instead it tries to argue that a critical mass of Vermonters embrace its values and politics. Outlander culture would prefer to argue its legitimacy on other terms entirely, such as what is logical or effective or ethical, but local culture never allows the issue of residential status to be dropped.

So far most of my discussion of the misalignment of the newcomer/Vermont dichotomy with the outlander/local dichotomy has focused on honorary locals. Their reverse image is the group of Vermonters who have embraced outlander culture to a significant extent. Politically, this group has been of extreme importance. Their existence has blunted the force of much of the local political agenda, standing as a public refutation of their claim to represent all Vermonters.

\(^{52}\) One illuminating example comes from a letter to the editor in a newspaper in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom opposing Act 200, the state’s planning law. The signature read: “Frances Willard Thompson/ (grew up in the Kingdom)/ Colchester.” The writer seeks to distance herself from the Burlington suburb of Colchester and assert her localness as someone who grew up in the Kingdom (Thompson, 1990).
If enough outlander Vermonters are in evidence, outlander advocates can represent locals as a marginal group that makes a lot of noise but shouldn’t be allowed to shift the political outcome. A passage from Laraway’s interview acknowledges the existence of outlander Vermonters while simultaneously detracting from their legitimacy. Continuing her earlier comments about zoning, she says, “At some point it may get to the point where we don’t feel like we can do much with our own land, which is pretty ridicu– And I feel that it’s only because of some of the people moving in are putting ideas in natives’ minds and thinking ‘oh maybe this would be a good thing, we should get this to go through’ but not necessarily thinking down the road of the consequences it could have on yourself.” This is a fairly candid acknowledgement that some Vermonters do support zoning, but at the same time it constructs those Vermonters as falling for a flashy idea and failing to show foresight and prudence. The wording “putting ideas in natives’ minds” strongly conveys a sense of leading them astray from appropriate political stances. The comment works to erode the status of the Vermonters who support zoning and to bolster the view that a property rights, anti-zoning stance is a defining feature of local culture, that is, “Vermont” culture.

The presence of outlander Vermonters forces the local cultural complex to rework its claims to represent Vermonters. If locals view outlander Vermonters as misguided – if it’s possible for Vermonters to be misguided – then the essentialism of the residential status division is shown to be false: all Vermonters manifestly do not share the same values and political stances. In an effort to recoup the power inherent in essentialist arguments, locals may deploy the idea of “real” Vermonters. As soon as you start distinguishing real Vermonters from the rest of the state’s residents, you have to look beyond residential status to such cultural attributes as behaviour, beliefs, values and political stances (Campbell, 2006; Searls, 2006, p. 16). My contention is that even when people aren’t attaching the term “real” to “Vermont,” their generalizations and claims about Vermonters position those Vermonters who display the right cultural attributes at the centre and push to the sides those who don’t. To conclude this chapter, I present a

53 This is clearly evident in a book of humour by (political scientist) Frank Bryan and his co-author Bill Mares entitled Real Vermonters Don’t Milk Goats (1983). Despite it’s jocosity the book has an edge that does as much to reinforce the social division as to lampoon it. Rusty DeWees has more recently gathered quite a following with his depiction of a local Vermonter in his theatre productions based on his “Logger” persona. See also the Country Courier editorial that I quoted at the beginning of the chapter.
hypothetical model for these social and discursive interactions. To test this model would require more research than I was able to do for this dissertation, but it fits closely enough to what I have seen during my research and my previous experiences in Vermont that I believe it to be a good working hypothesis.

With the loss of the bright line that residential status represents, identification of real Vermonters becomes difficult and contentious (though this contention is often not evident on the surface – Campbell, 2000). There is a circularity in the way claims to the status of “real” are made. Real Vermonters are identified by their display of local attributes, but the salience of each attribute is determined by those with recognized authority, i.e., real Vermonters. This circularity may seem logically problematic but it only is if we were to try to set up such a system from scratch. It doesn’t present problems for already existing systems – those who are already recognized authorities can recognize other real Vermonters and weigh in on the salience of particular attributes.

This model of the operation of social norms is based on the theory of performativity (Butler, 1990; Parker and Sedgwick, 1995; Pratt, 2004; Campbell 2006), which contends that identity categories are not static but are constantly maintained and reproduced through iterative practices. Such practices include castigating or ridiculing someone for not conforming to a norm and policing one’s own behaviour to ensure that it conforms. Comments such as Laraway’s about the independence and self-sufficiency of old-time Vermonters are also performative in that they intervene in the struggle to define what a Vermonter is or is not.

People with widely recognized local status achieve that status largely through conformance to norms. However, there is an important gap – a zone of negotiation – between norms and manifestation. This means that a person with recognized status can differ from the ideals to some extent without compromising his or her status. There are limits of course, but a person with a secure enough status can actually shift the ideals somewhat if she puts her weight behind an unorthodox stance. The wider community’s response to this redefining move is composed of a
collection of individual\textsuperscript{54} stances that are linked into a net, each subtly affecting the other (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995). Stances of assent, dissent and neutrality accumulate from private conversations or acts – which may then be recounted in other contexts – as well as from more public events. This accumulation can develop a strong enough tendency to become a clear collective stance. One of the aspects of these stances that performativity highlights is that not only does the stance a person adopts have effects on the status of the person being evaluated, it also has effects on the person adopting the stance. In other words, you can shift your own status by the evaluations you make of others (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995).

Performative claims can be clearly seen when people invoke generations of forebears as a way to give their words more power. In this discussion, it may be useful to distinguish between two different types of contexts, one being formal and impersonal and the other being informal and personal. Explicit use of residential credentials are particularly evident in formal, impersonal contexts, such as letters to the editor and public testimony, where someone is advocating for a political stance before an audience of strangers. Where people don’t know a speaker by name or reputation, residential status can serve to convey a lot of relevant information, or at least that is what is asserted by its invocation. In less formal settings where people are more likely to know the speaker, residential status by itself becomes less important as the whole panoply of his or her stances, values and practices comes into focus (Sibley, 1995, p.36). One’s cultural orientation becomes a critical tool for people who are attempting to determine how much credence to give to things one says. It is in these settings in particular that having a status of an honorary local can carry a lot of weight. To gain this status a person has to demonstrate commitment to the local cultural complex reliably, over a number of occasions. The longer the period over which she demonstrates such commitment the firmer her status becomes. All this would be immaterial if there didn’t come a day when she chose to take a stance in opposition to local culture. The measure of her status as honorary local is the degree to which at that moment people still listen to her, rather than dismissing her as a flatlander.

\textsuperscript{54} By calling these stances individual, I am not saying they can’t also be part of a collective response. The metaphor of the net is an effort to capture the sense that individual stances affect one another and aggregate to broader collective stances.
The problem with the way scholars and the general public have tended to look at social and political divisions in places like Vermont is that they take rhetoric about newcomers and locals too much at face value. This may be due in part to a view of politics that is skewed toward the formal, public realm where residential credentials are invoked most strenuously. The political fight is not between newcomers and Vermonters, but between local culture and outlander culture, and residential status just happens to be the most powerful rhetorical weapon in the battle. By broadening the focus to include culture, with all that that term encompasses, the description of political dynamics becomes much more complex but also more accurate. The reality is that despite the rhetoric, most people – even most locals – look for more than where a person was born to assess whether to listen to what he or she has to say. One of the main things they look at is commitment to a general cultural complex – what I’m calling local culture.

Much of the positioning and evaluation that I have described take place for the purpose of advancing the local cause. I have explored the rhetorical use of residential status in detail here in large part because I think taking it at face value obscures the more substantive ethical bases for listening to the locals. It would be easy to write off local demands as nativist or to argue that they don’t represent the will of Vermonters because of the outlander Vermonters that oppose them. But I think they merit more credence than that.

The local cultural complex does not represent all Vermonters, but the challenges that it raises should force us to ask who the people are that object to these policies and whether certain commonalities may lead them to be saddled with disproportionate burdens from the policies. The categories of residential status, political perspective, class, practices and social networks may combine to create groups with substantially different access to the resources necessary to realize their visions of land use. If we take the time to understand the concerns motivating the local vision for the land, we may find that it points out real dilemmas that we would do well to address seriously rather than brush aside.

The performative contentions over real Vermonters might turn out to be an unexpected guide in an effort to foster understanding. Although seldom done, it may be worth opening up to public discussion the question of what makes a person a real Vermonter and why that should give that person special authority. Such a discussion would have the effect of putting on the table the
values that animate the local community. We can talk about what a person with a deep knowledge of forestry and the wood products industry brings to the table and why we might want to ensure that the close connection to our resource base is in our future. We can talk about the value of multi-layered, lifelong social relationships and why displacement might be an evil we want to avoid. We can talk about the difficulty of finding one’s way in an economy that is shifting to service and professional jobs and why the options on offer feel like an impoverishment at many levels. If we could have these discussions in our communities, the rejection of newcomers might become less of an automatic reflex. We might come to find that that defensive response is due to a deafness on the part of outlanders to the genuine concerns of locals trying to make a living and preserve what they love about the state they live in.

Laraway gives us a glimpse of the delicate task that lies ahead and of the requirements that it makes on both sides: “There are a lot of good people that have moved into the state of Vermont, and I think a lot of their insight and ideas, it’s good to listen to them, but not let them all take over. And I think some people like myself have maybe sat back too long and have not spoken up. Because I’m not always aware of things, and that’s my own fault to not be more informed because I don’t get out to as many meetings as I should.” At meetings or outside of meetings, the task of listening to each other and informing ourselves can proceed apace and will continue the work of bridging the social divisions that are still such a prominent feature of our communities.
Chapter 5: Sceptics and Greens: Factor groups from Q analysis

In the previous chapter I undertook a close examination of the conflict between Vermonters and newcomers, arguing that this apparent conflict masks deeper tensions that play out across four other aspects of the social landscape – political orientation, class, practices and social interaction. Together with residential status, these form the components of what I called a cultural complex. The conflict between the two cultural complexes – locals and outlanders – cannot be reduced to the single component of residential status; people aren’t just fighting about who has lived in Vermont longest. Residential status comes to be the public face of conflicts over how to organize social life at a more general level. At the root of the conflict then are normative stances on governance – differing views about what are appropriate modes of collective oversight. The remainder of the dissertation is primarily focused on normative stances on land use governance as they play out in the context of the local and outlander cultural complexes.

This chapter presents the results of the Q analysis of 32 sets of responses to my survey on land use governance. The most striking result is the separation of the sample into two relatively distinct clusters each centred on a different factor. These clusters show two general tendencies within the sample: one foregrounds the importance of protecting environmental goods, while the other is more concerned with limiting government encroachment on individual freedom. One or the other of these tendencies can be discerned in most of the participants, however there are important areas of tension, both where individuals depart from the cluster and where the cluster itself holds contradictory stances.

5.1 Analysis results

Of the factors that emerged from the factor analysis of the survey, I retained the two strongest, giving them the names Green Governance and Government Scepticism. The strength of the factors is reflected in their eigenvalues, which can be interpreted as the amount of the overall variance that each factor explains (See Figure 9). The eigenvalues were 10.6 and 5.8 for the Green Governance and Government Scepticism factors respectively, which translates into 33%
and 18% of the variance of the whole survey. Rotation redistributed the values slightly toward the Government Sceptic factor, producing eigenvalues of 10.4 (32%) and 6.0 (19%). The four factors after these had eigenvalues of 1.9, 1.7, 1.6 and 1.1. They would be retained under the Kaiser criterion but not under the Cattell test. I explored retaining various numbers of factors from 2 to 6 but felt that retaining more than 2 factors did not help to explain the survey responses. Additional factors were difficult to interpret particularly since the few people with significant loadings often had little in common.

![Eigenvalues for 32 factors](image)

**Figure 9:** Initial eigenvalues of all 32 factors extracted by Principal Components factor analysis

On the two retained factors, 19 people loaded significantly on the Green Governance factor (loadings above 0.38 are significant at the p<0.01 level) and 13 people loaded significantly on the Government Scepticism factor (see Table 3). Of these, one person (Mickey Jackson) loaded positively on both factors and one person (Margaret Price) loaded positively on Green Governance and negatively on Government Scepticism. Two people didn’t load significantly on either factor (Peter Marquette and Dennis Tremblay).
Table 3: Factor loadings of respondents on Green Governance (GG) and Government Scepticism (GS) factors; loadings significant at the p<0.01 level highlighted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>GG Loading</th>
<th>GS Loading</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Arsenault</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Barnard</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Bowen</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel Carleton</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Cartwright</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Chisholm</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan Chisholm</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Collins</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Collins</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Daniels</td>
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<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Flannery</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Forrestal</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Goodman</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norton Goodman</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Hall</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mickey Jackson</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica Keller</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Kingsbury</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Konig</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marianne Konig</td>
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<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard LaChance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denise Laraway</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ken Lines</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Marquette</td>
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<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jeff Metcalfe</td>
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<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<td>Alvin Moore</td>
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<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Morton</td>
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<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah Morton</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Price</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Price</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The clear division of the respondents into two groups gives a first impression of polarization. However, it is important to consider the loadings on both factors for each participant. In nearly every case, a participant with a high loading on one factor has a loading near zero on the other factor. The truly polarized scenario would have a single factor with each group clustered at opposite poles. Instead, when we plot each participant onto an X-Y plot defined by the two factors, we see that they form two clusters centred on each of the axes, but spreading somewhat between the two (see Figure 10). The fact that there is only one person with a significantly negative loading on either factor provides a strong argument that, although there are two distinct clusters, polarization is not the most apt way of describing the spread of perspectives within this sample. The results show that the defining issues for one factor are often matters that the other factor feels mixed or ambivalent about. In the discussion that follows, I highlight the areas in the results where responses to individual statements show noticeable ambivalence among people loading on one factor or the other.
A second issue to consider here is the degree to which the two factors identified explain the responses of each of the participants. This is reflected in the column of communalities in Table 3. The communality represents the proportion of variation that is explainable by the two retained factors, or how well the factor model “works” for each participant. As can be seen from the table, these range from a high of 0.82 for Ken Lines to a low of 0.20 for Dennis Tremblay and Peter Marquette (on a scale from 0 to 1). These numbers along with the range of factor loadings should caution us about casually applying labels from the factors to participants that load on the factors. As seen in the case of Scott Barnard, it is possible to load significantly on a factor and
still have a communality as low as 0.27 (see Appendix 2 for Barnard’s responses plotted against the factor averages). The descriptions of factor averages that follow, then, must be viewed in that light; they represent ideals derived from the responses, but many people loading on the factor depart significantly from those ideals.

I use the factor averages as a baseline for the exploration of the normative stances that the participants express both in their surveys and in their interviews (see Appendix 2). The averages are useful as a way to characterize two major tendencies within the sample; the fact that these tendencies are clearly discernible and relatively distinct buttresses the argument that cultural complexes do exist and that political orientation is an important component of them. At the same time, I want to avoid overdrawing the distinction between the factor groups. It is too easy to depict a significant loading on one factor or the other as the most salient characteristic of a participant in the study. In much of what follows, I explore some of the ambiguities that could drop from view if we were to adopt the factor labels too quickly. I see these two approaches to interpreting the analysis results as complementary: it is important to recognize key tendencies within the social groups, but it is also important to highlight and try to understand what is happening when cases don’t closely follow the trends.

### 5.2 Factor 1: Green Governance

I gave the first factor the name Green Governance to simultaneously highlight its emphasis on environmental protection and its embrace of collective action to achieve its conservation goals. The clearest signal from the responses loading on this factor is the call for active protection of the environment through government or social effort. The factor shows a spirited defence of Vermont’s environmental record and policies. However, when moving from statements that are more abstract or based in principle to statements focusing on concrete effects, the factor shows more ambivalence toward regulation. One manifestation of this ambivalence is a recognition of the burdens that regulation imposes and a sympathy for those who have to bear those burdens, although the factor shows little hesitation to set limits on the rights of private property owners. Conservation of the traditional working landscape is a central objective of this factor. This translates into a relatively strong support of land-based industry coupled with a call for oversight
of their operations. Overall, the factor leans toward environmentalism, but tries to balance environmental protection with livelihood concerns.

Table 3.3 (Appendix 2) shows a list of the 45 statements ordered by the Green Governance factor score calculated for each statement. Most of the top statements in this list are united by the imperative to protect the land or the environment. In these statements protection is active; the statements call for people, the government, the society to do something to ensure that the environmental values are preserved. Every statement until the seventh ranked one (food prod) either explicitly or implicitly calls for such action, and the statements ranked 8 to 13 continue in that vein. Looking more closely at these statements it appears that the most highly ranked statements are those that leave the specific action or effort general, even if the value to be protected is specific – so for instance we have the need to “make a special effort to protect threatened and endangered species” (end sps -- #3, score 3.0). The top ranked statement (responsity, score 3.4) is the most general statement of all, “Our society needs to put more effort into fostering a sense of personal responsibility toward the land.” Statements that call for more specific actions fall somewhat lower in the rankings: ID cons (#15, score 2.2) – “State government should systematically identify high priority areas that will be conservation targets” – is still positively ranked but the degree of agreement is substantially lower. Still, there are some highly ranked statements that call for relatively specific government action, such as sv ag soils

55 The factor scores in Q method are often presented in a rounded form fit to the distribution template that was used in the participants’ sorting. In other words, if the participants were told to assign only 3 statements to +4, then the factor scores are used to determine the three highest ranked statements and assign them a +4 ranking (irrespective of the average ranking the statement receives from those loading on the factor). The loss of information resulting from this rounding is minimal when participants have been forced to conform to a normal distribution, but when they haven’t it can result in significant distortion of the actual ratings assigned. Hence, I have chosen to present scores that are based on the weighted average of the responses, rather than force them into a distribution template. In calculating the averages, I used Spearman’s weighting factor \( w = f/(1-f^2) \); where \( w \) is the weighting factor and \( f \) is the factor loading – see Brown 1980, 240] to give more weight to the rankings of respondents with higher loadings. So for example Denise Laraway’s ranking of env regs as +1 had only 14% of the influence of Norton Goodman’s ranking of +3 in the calculation of the Green Governance factor score of 3.0 (since Laraway has a loading of 0.42 and Goodman a loading of 0.87). The other option would be to use the z-scores for each statement. The problem with using z-scores is that they reset the zero-point at the average response of the 45 items, which in my case means moving the scores for some items down more than 1 point. The result is that statements where most of the loading participants gave positive responses are rescaled to look like the factor is neutral. Z-scores also rescale the responses as the number of standard deviations from the mean, which makes the scale itself different from the original response range. The correlations between the z scores and my ranking method is 0.998 and 0.995 for factors 1 and 2 respectively.
(6, score 2.8) – “It is important to protect Vermont’s prime agricultural soils by keeping
development off of them.”

Statements that identify the causes of problems appear lower in the rankings than statements
advocating protective action. Food prod (#7, 2.7) fin asset (#14, 2.2) and ag expl (#21, 1.9) all
identify threats to the environment and receive positive ratings, however they are noticeably less
compelling to most of the Greens. This fits with a sense from many of the interviews that this
group sees the problems facing the land as multifaceted (sometimes paralyzingly so) and is not
comfortable singling out one sole factor as a threat.

Another feature of the Green Governance factor can be seen in the most negative rankings: its
overall defence of the state’s record of environmental policy. 2 far ahd (#44, -2.3) and land
trusts (#43, -2.0) are strong endorsements of public and public/private efforts respectively –
“Vermont has gotten too far ahead of the surrounding states with its environmental regulations”;
“Land trusts have already protected enough land.” That defence becomes somewhat less robust
with 2m regs (#38, -1.0) – “Vermont has too many regulations that unreasonably restrict what
you can do with your land.” This is another example of a larger trend across the factor where
support for government action softens as the details emerge.

That trend is particularly evident in some of the statements that appear in the middle of the
ranking. Despite the strong support for collective or governmental action on the environment in
general, the Greens show a marked ambivalence about some of these actions when details of
their effects are raised. The statements hold up (#28, 0.2), unfr biz (#30, 0.1) and cost perm (#32,
0.0) all fall around zero on average. The latter two explicitly raise the economic impacts of
regulation – “One of the main economic issues facing Vermont is its unfriendly business climate,
in particular, the cost and effort needed to satisfy state regulations”; “The cost of permits has
driven up the price of house sites, putting them beyond the reach of many working Vermonters.”
These two statements have very wide standard deviations; unfr biz is the widest for the factor at
2.13 points on the scale; hold up is lower but still high at 1.86 points. The ratings suggest that
people loading on this factor do have some sympathy for arguments that regulation imposes

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56 Standard deviations reported in this research are weighted just as the averages are, so that those loading higher
on the factor have more influence over the final figures.
significant burdens. However, in the context of their more general support for regulation, it seems that Greens are willing to overlook these impacts. It may be that they see no better alternative.

One of the types of government action that is most relevant to discussions of neoliberalism is action taken to affect markets. The Green Governance factor shows some willingness to intervene in markets to protect things it values, such as small farms (sv sm frms -- #10, 2.5) and the working landscape (supp WL -- #17, 2.1) – “It is important to protect small farms and prevent them from being swallowed up by larger farms”; “The government should support the agriculture and forest products industries to ensure they survive in the globally competitive market.” Conversely, it is relatively strong in its rejection of compete (#40, -1.4) – “The reality of the global economy is that businesses that can’t compete will go under, and in the end we’re better off if we let that process run its course.” However, that modestly negative rating obscures a number of responses among the Greens that are in the neutral to slightly-agree range. One question on this topic was intentionally provocative, setting up embrace of the free market against the influx of out-of-staters (free mkt ld -- #26, 0.3). Only four people objected to the statement “Since we have a free market in land, we have to accept that wealthy out-of-staters will continue to move here and that land prices will go up.” This suggests that the free market in land is firmly entrenched as an institution whose effects have to be accepted57.

Along with markets, private property rights are frequently portrayed as foundational to neoliberalism. Three questions directly addresses the relationship between landowner rights and the public good. On two of them, hard PPR (#45, -2.7) and open acc (#11, 2.3), the Green Governance factor clearly sides with public values (“The owner of a piece of land has the right to do whatever he or she wants with it, even if that means degrading that land's resources for future use”; “Vermont’s long-standing tradition of open access to land needs to be preserved”). Hard PPR in particular stands out as this factor’s most intense negative rating in the survey. A more ambiguous situation is represented in post (#23, 1.0) – “If a landowner has had a bad experience with people who use their land, it is entirely appropriate that they post their land in response.” This statement sits in tension with open acc; post feels out the limits of what a landowner should

57 Arthur Konig objected to the characterization of out-of-staters as wealthy, but that did not lead him to reject the statement, suggesting that he accepts the free market in land. He gave the statement a zero.
tolerate in service of the public good. On this statement Greens were slightly less likely to accept posting than the Government Sceptics, but the difference was very small. These questions don’t come close to comprehensively covering the issue of property rights; they focus on two public values – the availability of resources for future use and the public access to private land. On these the Green Governance factor shows a strong predilection for the public good but with some sympathy, in the case of access, for the complex situation of landowners.

The second highest ranked statement, *viab WL* (3.3), posits that “The working landscape will disappear unless we devote more attention to maintaining a viable agricultural and forest products economy.” This high placement is not only an indication of agreement, which may not be so significant with this positive (i.e., non-normative) statement; it also is a marker of perceived salience. In other words, one could agree that this statement is true but not see it as particularly important and therefore give it a lower rank (this is particularly true with forced distributions, but holds to a substantial degree in unforced as well). The fact that the working landscape’s viability is seen as so salient for the Green Governance factor is noteworthy. The agriculture and forest products industries are not always the darlings of the environmental movement, to put it mildly. The high ranking of this and other working landscape related statements (e.g. *cluster* -- #5, 2.9; *sv ag soils* -- #6, 2.8; *supp WL* -- #17, 2.1) indicates that this factor displays support for extractive economies, tempered with a desire for oversight. In fact, the working landscape is one of the places where Margaret Price, the most ardent environmentalist of the survey, departs substantially from the factor (see Appendix 1). The acceptance of extraction and the concern for economic impacts of regulation displayed by the Green Governance factor means that we have to recognize the factor as a complex and nuanced perspective. It is not a stereotypically environmental position that evaluates everything according to a single standard. Instead it is more pragmatic, making an effort to balance competing values as best it can.

58 It also accords well with survey findings of the Commission for the Future of Vermont that found that Vermont’s working landscape rated the highest of 12 values presented to 699 Vermonters in a survey in 2008 (Moser et al. 2008).
5.3 Factor 2: Government Scepticism

To the second factor that emerged from the analysis I gave the name Government Scepticism, highlighting what I see as its defining feature (see Table 3.4 Appendix 2). This scepticism is clearest in the factor’s rejection of Vermont’s current system of environmental regulation. It is tempered, however, by an attachment to the traditional landscape resulting in the factor’s ambivalence on some measures that seek to protect aspects of the landscape. While the factor opposes many current policies aimed at environmental protection, at a more general level it shows much more complex feelings toward the environment as a public good worthy of protection. This is in tension with a clear loyalty towards land-based industries such as agriculture and forest-products, with a productionist mindset generally winning the upper hand. The factor sees land-workers as the real authorities on environmental impacts and is disdainful of the land governance ideas newcomers bring with them. While the factor shows strong leanings towards private property rights and the free market, the survey uncovers a number of limitations that people in this factor would set on their operation.

The scepticism that inspired the name of this factor is clear to see in the most highly ranked statements; four of the top five statements describe problems with regulation or permitting. Taken together they argue that Vermont’s overregulation creates an unfriendly business climate, holding up worthy development and driving up the costs of land and house sites (unfr biz -- #1, score 3.9; hold up -- #2, 3.7; 2m regs -- #4, 3.5; cost perm -- #5, 3.4). The tax burden and bureaucracy are also targets that emerge in subsequent statements (2mch tax -- #8, 3.0; and bureauc -- #9, 2.9). One of the most consistent threads in this factor is a harsh critique of government oversight of land use, and of government more generally, though as we will see there are submerged threads in this perspective as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unfb biz</td>
<td>One of the main economic issues facing Vermont is its unfriendly business climate, in particular, the cost and effort needed to satisfy state regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hold up</td>
<td>Vermont law makes it too easy for one person to hold up development projects by appealing permits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m regs</td>
<td>Vermont has too many regulations that unreasonably restrict what you can do with your land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost perm</td>
<td>The cost of permits has driven up the price of house sites, putting them beyond the reach of many working Vermonters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2mch tax</td>
<td>Vermont’s government operations take up too many of our tax dollars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bureauc</td>
<td>State government is too bureaucratic and inefficient to effectively oversee land use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where the Greens were quick to embrace actions and efforts aimed at protecting environmental and other values, this factor is sceptical about such efforts. At the most general level they are openly hostile to the current system of environmental protection, as the statements described above show. Efforts directed at specific issues receive a more mixed response, but many of the respondents who load on this factor made comments that emphasized their concern with the manner in which protection was pursued. Protecting the working landscape in general received modest support from this factor, as evidenced by a number of statements. The more general of these (viab WL -- #18, 2.0; supp WL -- #21, 1.7) include two components that are in tension with each other for this factor: the working landscape is positively valued by people loading on this factor but efforts to protect it are viewed warily59. *Sv ag soils* (#23, 1.5) follows this pattern while getting more specific about what is to be protected and how. In comments made while taking the survey, some respondents said that this statement’s call to save prime agricultural soils by “keeping development off of them” was not specific enough; they were concerned that the burden of protection would fall on the farmer (as loss of land value). However they agreed that the goal of protecting those soils was worthy. *Cluster* (#28, 0.9) shows a similar ambivalence toward efforts to encourage building in already developed areas. This “ambivalence” is partly the product of a particularly wide spread of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>viab WL</th>
<th>Our working landscape will disappear unless we devote more attention to maintaining a viable agricultural and forest products economy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>supp WL</td>
<td>The government should support the agriculture and forest products industries to ensure they survive in the globally competitive market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sv ag soils</td>
<td>It is important to protect Vermont’s prime agricultural soils by keeping development off of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cluster</td>
<td>Vermont should encourage people to build houses in already developed areas, not in farm fields or working forests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59 The survey didn’t include a simple question asking people whether the working landscape was valuable or not, largely for reasons of survey length. However the attachment to the working landscape is unmistakeable in the interviews with people loading on this factor.
responses (weighted standard deviation of 2.43 points); individually some people were quite clear where they stood but as a group they were all over the map\textsuperscript{60}.

Some of the statements about efforts to achieve environmental protection are rated much higher than we might expect given the hostility to government that the most highly ranked statements seem to show. The fundamental need for environmental regulations, \textit{env regs}, was actually rated above zero (#29, 0.8). The need to make a special effort to protect endangered species (\textit{end sps} -- #32) received a 0.4. Even the strongly worded \textit{green rep} (#36) received a neutral average rating of 0. What these ratings show is that in general people loading on this factor do not \textit{in principle} reject the idea of the environment as a common good worthy of protection. The highly ranked anti-government statements are targeted at the actual system in place now and don’t mean that the Sceptics oppose the very idea of protection. Neither, however, are they quite ready to support the idea, most likely because they don’t believe that efforts at protection can avoid the pitfalls that the current system has fallen into.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>\textbf{env regs}</th>
<th>We need environmental regulations to keep people from polluting the land and damaging our natural resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{end sps}</td>
<td>We need to make a special effort to protect threatened and endangered species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{green rep}</td>
<td>We need to protect Vermont’s green reputation by holding industry to strict environmental standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social issues and power relations among different sections of the community are issues with some clear salience to the Government Sceptics. They are unanimous in their sense that the people who work the land know best about how to keep the land healthy (\textit{listen}  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>\textbf{listen}</th>
<th>The best way to figure out how to keep the land healthy is to listen to people who work the land everyday.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{OOS ig}</td>
<td>Too many out-of-staters don’t understand the rural economy or way of life and propose land use controls that are inappropriate for Vermont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{prev gen}</td>
<td>Previous generations of Vermonters have been good stewards of the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{VT caters}</td>
<td>Vermont caters to wealthy out-of-staters and doesn’t consider the needs of working class locals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{tourism}</td>
<td>Vermont puts too much emphasis on tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{hostile}</td>
<td>Locals are too hostile to newcomers and new ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{60} Positive loading participants gave the following ratings: +4 – Arsenault, Flannery / +3 – Daniels/ +2 – Carleton, E. Tremblay, J. Morton, Cartwright/ +1 – Jackson/ 0 – A. Morton, Barnard/ -2 – Kingsbury/ -4 – Metcalfe.
-- #3, 3.6) as opposed to the out-of-staters who don’t understand the rural economy and propose inappropriate land use controls (OOS ig -- #7, 3.0). Some, however are willing to concede that locals haven’t always done well by their land; some ambivalent rankings on prev gen (#15), which states that previous generation have been good stewards, pull its score down to 2.1. A range of opinions emerges on the question of whether Vermont caters to wealthy out-of-staters at the expense of working class locals (VT caters -- #27, 0.9) and there is a similarly lukewarm reception to the statement that Vermont puts too much emphasis on tourism (tourism -- #30, 0.7). The picture that emerges from these statements is complex, calling for the empowerment of locals on land use issues and trying to limit the power of out-of-staters, but not strongly faulting Vermont for the approach it currently adopts. This was somewhat surprising given the strong sentiments I heard in many of the interviews about the threat posed by out-of-staters. It is interesting to note that even though many locals have strong feelings about newcomers, even the Greens with a heavy representation of newcomers rated negatively the statement that locals are too hostile to newcomers and new ideas (hostile – Greens: #37, -0.7; Sceptics #44, -1.5). While there are significant social divisions in Vermont, these results suggest that there are factors that moderate the divisions as well.

The Government Sceptics display more sympathy to land-based industry than the Greens. They are fairly solid in their support of timber production, agreeing that Vermont has a responsibility to produce timber since it can do so sustainably (tmb prod -- #11, 2.6), though it should be noted that the Greens are only a point lower on this statement. The difference is much greater on the statements criticizing the U.S. food production system – ag expl (#38) earned a 0.6 to the Greens’ 1.9 and food prod (#26, 0.9) showed a difference of around two points. However, ag expl was the statement with the widest spread for the factor (weighted standard deviation of 2.53 points). Some of the farmers or former farmers agreed that the system forced them to overexploit their land and animals (with Jeremiah
Morton giving it a resounding +4). Angela Morton gave it a -2; she had a lot of comments about farmers’ increasing level of awareness of environmental impacts and felt that people were trying to do better by their land. Overall, a reluctance to criticize the industry seems to struggle against a recognition of the difficult position many farmers are in. Sympathy for productive industries is more pronounced in the case of forestry, with little credence given to the view of logging as destructive. The Sceptics reject the idea that the impacts of timber operations necessitate wilderness areas (*wild ecos* -- #42, -1.4). They also are relatively supportive of large scale commodity production, rejecting the statement that the focus should shift from low-end commodities like logs and bulk milk to high value-added products (*low end* -- #39, -0.7). Overall, it is clear that the Sceptics are more closely allied to the industries that make a living from the land, but that doesn’t preclude criticism occasionally emerging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wild ecos</th>
<th>Wilderness areas are necessary because even carefully managed timber operations have some negative impact on the ecosystem.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low end</td>
<td>Vermont should get out of low-end commodity production (i.e. shipping logs or bulk milk) and focus on value-added products.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hunting and the related issue of access to land are particularly interesting on this factor. Hunting is a highly salient issue for the Sceptics; they affirmed the importance of the practice to the management of wildlife populations (#6, 3.1). But the issue of access to land for hunting gets tangled in property rights issues. The statement affirming the need to preserve Vermont’s tradition of *open access* ranked twelfth (2.5) for this factor, nearly identical to the Green’s rating (#11, 2.3). Even more interesting is the factor’s response to *post*, which states that it is appropriate for landowners to post their land when they have had a bad experience with people using it. The Sceptics ranked this statement 22nd (1.7) while the Greens ranked it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hunting</th>
<th>Hunting is important to keeping the population of wildlife under control.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>open access</td>
<td>Vermont’s long-standing tradition of open access to land needs to be preserved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>If a landowner has had a bad experience with people who use their land, it is entirely appropriate that they post their land in response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23rd (1.0). So, despite their stronger attachment to hunting, the Sceptics defend a landowner’s right to post more strongly than the Greens.

The Sceptics’ position on post leads naturally to the statement hard PPR. I formulated this statement with the people who turned out to be Sceptics in mind. I wanted to see what the limits of their belief in private property rights were. Hard PPR states “The owner of a piece of land has the right to do whatever he or she wants with it, even if that means degrading the land’s resources for future use.” Mickey Jackson saw through me, saying this was a trick question that actually asks “Is he really a redneck?” I wouldn’t have put it that way, but it’s very significant that Jackson instantly puts together defence of private property with being a redneck. (He ultimately gave the statement a -1.) The average response for the factor was 0.3, placing it 34th. The Sceptics were not very comfortable with the idea of degrading the land. Note that this is different from infringing on a neighbour’s property rights, another common limitation placed on a landowner’s property rights. In theory the degradation would be captured in loss of land value, so the market should take care of it and the landowner should pay the price for his or her actions. But I suspect that the idea of waste that is brought up by the word “degrade” rubbed people the wrong way. They take seriously the idea that we are stewards of the land. In their comments they made clear that their idea of degradation may be quite different from an environmentalist’s – both Barnard and Kingsbury make clear that cutting trees is not what they would call degradation. But if it meets their definition of degradation, few of them offer much in the way of support.

Tensions in this factor also come out in the statement free mkt ld, which states that since we have a free market in land, we have to accept wealthy out-of-staters moving in and pushing land prices up. This statement sought to see how people would balance belief in the free market with its effects on affordability. The factor ranking came in at #26 with an average response of 1.4. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no one enthusiastically supported it – the only +4 came

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>free mkt ld</th>
<th>Since we have a free market in land, we have to accept that wealthy out-of-staters will continue to move here and that land prices will go up.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>compete</td>
<td>The reality of the global economy is that businesses that can’t compete will go under, and in the end we’re better off if we let that process run its course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supp WL</td>
<td>The government should support the agriculture and forest products industries to ensure they survive in the globally competitive market.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with the comment “unfortunate, but true” (Arsenault). Angela Morton’s comments make clear that she doesn’t like to see the demographics change but the newcomers are the ones that can afford the taxes. This may be the reality, she says, but she doesn’t have to “accept” it; she gave the statement a -1. Other statements further illuminate the factor’s stance on competition.

Sceptics showed a lukewarm response to the idea that it’s best to leave uncompetitive businesses to the mercy of the global economy (compete -- #35, 0.2). Conversely they showed notable agreement with the idea of the government supporting the agriculture and forestry industries to ensure their survival in the global market (supp WL -- #21, 1.7). These limit cases show that when areas the Sceptics value are on the line, they take a pragmatic position rather than following free market ideologies to the letter.

Although the two factors I present here show marked differences on key issues, it is clear that they are not diametrically opposed to one another. The general trends captured in each of the factors are full of tensions. I have tried to pull some of them out in this discussion, but have been limited by the need to keep these portraits succinct. In the following chapters, however, many of these tensions are explored in more detail. Furthermore, I will embed the discussion more firmly in the context of land use issues that are current preoccupations among the people I spoke with.

My use of factor analysis techniques on survey data has allowed me to provide a statistically meaningful composite portrait of two contrasting normative outlooks on land use issues in Vermont. These portraits do not represent any single individual perfectly, but they supply a useful basis for comparing individuals, and they identify the issues that most reliably distinguish between different perspectives. The interview material then puts flesh on the bones of the statistical analysis; it allows us to follow the chain of connections the participants make as they arrive at normative stances such as those in the survey. Without this perspective, the causal models that subtend the normative stances would remain opaque, which would limit our understanding of the political motivations that animate actors in land use conflicts. This combination of methods gives me a reasonable degree of confidence that the portraits that I paint bear a strong resemblance to views that circulate in the community under study. More extensive survey work could determine how strongly the respective outlooks are represented in key social
groups, of the type that appear in the previous chapter on cultural complexes. The present work provides a solid foundation for such a direction by identifying and detailing the key issues along which the community cleaves.
Chapter 6: Working the land: land uses in a political context

In the previous chapters, I considered how social divisions arise and are reproduced through the medium of cultural complexes. I then presented the broad outlines of the divisions as they appear in political stances from my survey data. In this chapter, I move on to discuss a number of concrete land issues around which social divisions play out. Drawing on both the interviews and the survey responses, I highlight areas where the social divisions do not map neatly onto the issues – places where people of whichever group have some difficulty deciding which stance to adopt. At the same time, there are many places where the issues under discussion work to push the two cultural complexes apart. It is the interplay between these polarizing and unifying forces that makes a careful study of the politics of land use governance worth pursuing.

This chapter is divided into five sections, each dealing with a separate area of land use. Within each section I provide some background information on key issues then discuss the perspectives that arose in the course of my research. The first section considers agriculture in Vermont, noting the concern throughout the state that is raised by the difficulty farmers have in keeping their businesses solvent. It further attends to divisions about what path would lead to farming that is more sustainable both economically and environmentally. After looking at agriculture, I turn next to the forest products industry, which if anything has been suffering through a more intense period of crisis than farming has. Increased competition has taken a toll, but some also point to government policies that they say hamstring the industry. In particular wilderness designation comes in for criticism, yet there is also a substantial acceptance of the need to ensure that forest practices are environmentally sound. The third section looks at residential development and the contradictions that it introduces to land use politics. Many people from both cultural complexes are concerned to watch farm and forestland turn into a residential landscape. At the same time, this conversion brings important benefits to many, both in the form of housing and in increased land values. These contradictions make it challenging for people to settle on appropriate policies to address residential development. The next section looks at a selection of key practices that depend on the land – hunting and various recreational practices, both motorized and not. The fact that many of the people engaging in these practices rely on
landowners’ willingness to let them access their land introduces some interesting tensions in the cultural complexes. The political perspective of each of the factor groups engages differently with property and public benefits, such as recreational opportunity. These broad questions are addressed more fully in the final section of the chapter, which considers governance issues more generally. It looks at how different people prioritize a range of public benefits, and argues that what is distinctive is the balance that people strike. There is often wide recognition of the underlying value of each of the public benefits but different groups put the emphasis in different places. This leads to concrete differences over policy options and assessments of government functioning.

Through these five sections, I attempt to cover many of the main points of contention in land use debates in Vermont. Governance is one issue that runs throughout the chapter. Another is the working landscape. This notion has arisen in the past few decades, alongside similar notions such as the working forest, as a way to highlight the value of landscapes that have both natural and human components (Cronon, 1995; Wolf and Klein, 2007; Daniels, 2000). By the time I began my research in Vermont, awareness of the benefits of the working landscape was widespread. Support comes from many quarters, across the political spectrum. Perhaps the strongest testimony of the breadth of this support comes from a survey issued in 2008 by the Council on the Future of Vermont which found that 97.2% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I value the working landscape and its heritage” – the statement in the survey that generated the most consensus.

The mix of farmland and forestland that characterizes the working landscape is said to give Vermont its distinctive character (Council on the Future of Vermont, 2009; Albers, 2000). This land has been heavily used since Europeans settled it about two centuries ago. Before that, Native Americans made substantial use of the land, though the intensity was less than in southern parts of New England (Cronon, 1983). About a century ago, at the height of the sheep boom, the land was three quarters cleared. Now the forest occupies three quarters of the state’s surface. But that shouldn’t be taken as a sign that the land has slipped into disuse; the farm economy has always been matched by a strong wood products industry in the state. This long history of use has left its imprint on the land, in the built environment of scattered farmsteads and villages.
clustered along watercourses, and also in the patchwork of fields, pastures and woodlots whose configuration has changed very slowly since the land was first surveyed.

The result of this history of use is a landscape with clear powers of attraction. Vermont is well-known as a tourist destination, in no small part due to the efforts of an active marketing arm of the state government. The tourist economy is enormously important to Vermont, sustaining 12% of the workforce, with tourists spending $1.61 billion in the state in 2007 (Vt. Dept of Tourism and Marketing, 2007). As important as the landscape is to tourists, it is even more significant to most residents. Nearly every participant in my interviews commented on the pleasure they derive from some aspect of the working landscape, whether from its beauty, from recreation and work in a rural setting, or from spiritual sustenance it provides.

The fact that these sources of pleasure are so varied is important. In many ways, the working landscape is an uneasy balance, and the fact that aesthetic values, economic values, social values and environmental values all line up as well as they do is something of a miracle. Of course the reality is that there are significant tensions between these values once we move away from the abstract concept of the working landscape. The working landscape is one of those vague terms that everyone can get behind, but the interpretations of it vary widely (see Wolf and Klein’s 2007 analysis of the related term the “working forest”). Perhaps the most fundamental tension is that, given that the working landscape represents a balance of ecological and human benefits, some means of finding appropriate weights for each side of the balance is necessary. This ties in to the different assessments of specific management practices, the impacts they have on the environment, and the availability of viable alternatives. As will be seen in the following sections, these sorts of issues arise quickly when efforts to conserve the working landscape get underway. Before the promise of consensus around the working landscape can be realized, understandings would need to be hammered out between different constituencies on these concrete concerns.

6.1 Agriculture

Farming has been in crisis in Vermont for decades, if public proclamations are to be believed. Dairy farming has been the mainstay of Vermont agriculture since the sheep boom ended around the Civil War (Albers, 2000), but its future appears increasingly precarious. One of the most
commonly used indicators of decline is the number of dairy farms, which has been steadily dropping from about 11,000 in 1950 to around 1000 currently (Vermont Council on Rural Development, 2011). These stark numbers mask the fact that land in farming has not declined nearly so precipitously, as there has been a parallel tendency for farm size to increase. The different opinions on whether the various trends constitute a crisis reflect different primary values. For some the fact that there are still opportunities for smart business-people to make a living at farming leads to the conclusion that reports of a crisis are overblown. Add to that the fact that technological changes have kept production levels high despite declining farm numbers. Others are less impressed by production levels and business opportunity; factors that figure more highly among their concerns include Vermont’s farming traditions and the environmental impact of agricultural production.

Dairy farmers have been particularly hard hit by price volatility and the overall tendency of prices to fall (Vt. Legislature, 2002). As a result, they have to squeeze whatever profit they hope to make out of a smaller return. This can lead to cutting corners, delaying capital expenditures etc. The other approach is to ramp up production so profits come from the larger volume of milk. The difficulty dairy farmers face in this scenario is that increasing production usually means taking on big debts to fund farm expansion. Banks have been all too willing to bankroll these initiatives, often pushing farmers to take out larger loans than they sought.61

The difficulty making ends meet has driven many farm families into other lines of work, often with painful debts to deal with from years of operating at a loss. Many farms are sustained by the off-farm income that one of the family members pursues. The social and psychological effects of these circumstances arouse a lot of sympathy in the broader population, given the iconic status of the dairy farm family in Vermont. At the same time, these public expressions of sympathy and concrete state support also spark resentment among those who are suffering similar effects in other sectors of the economy. In several of the interviews, participants described farmers as coddled by the state. Some people asserted that the state rewards poor management practices by bailing farmers out when the market for milk is down. People who

61 Interview with State Representative Dexter Randall (May 15, 2008)
work in the forest industry displayed particular resentment because they feel that their industry gets none of the special attention that farming does.

Operating at a loss has potentially significant environmental effects as well. Alvin Moore asserts that “if people can’t make a fair living from the land, they’re going to be driven to practices that are at the margin” citing examples of ploughing hedgerow to hedgerow or expanding into wetlands. This increasingly intensive use of land can reduce habitat for plants and animals that had been able to coexist with agriculture. Margaret Price notes that more frequent haying has taken a significant toll on ground nesting birds that can no longer raise broods between cuts.

A crisis in agriculture produces a massive reordering of the landscape as farms fall into disuse or are taken over by other uses such as housing. Fear of such landscape-level changes is a significant motivating factor for conservation measures. Whereas regulatory approaches such as zoning have encountered significant obstacles, market-based, voluntary approaches have taken off. The immensely successful Vermont Land Trust pursues a strategy of purchasing the development rights on agricultural land and in this manner has conserved more than 500,000 acres of land, representing 8% of the private undeveloped land in the state (Vermont Land Trust, 2011). This addresses the biggest fear of a powerful constituency – those who cherish Vermont’s rural, undeveloped character. However, many point out that without working farms, the pastoral landscape will grow up to brush, and that conserving land is only one piece of the puzzle. Addressing farm viability is critical. One issue is that land that is conserved can still be too expensive for farmers to buy when they have to compete with people looking to purchase a country estate. The land trust has tried to address the affordability issue by introducing measures such as the Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value, allowing them to buy the conserved land at less than market price and then find a buyer who will keep it in agriculture. This begins to chip away at the viability issue, but bigger concerns about the structure of the agriculture sector remain.

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62 This was an interesting area of disagreement between two farm organizations in my interviews – Rural Vermont made a comment similar to Moore’s but the Farm Bureau insisted that farmers have such a strong stewardship ethic that they would never do anything to hurt their land, recognizing that it would amount to shooting themselves in the foot.
In addition there is an undercurrent of discontent about land trust activity among Government Sceptics. Six survey participants, all sceptics, agreed (+2 or higher) with the land trusts statement that “land trusts have already protected enough land,” implying that it is no longer an appropriate conservation measure (if they ever felt that it was). More strikingly, 16 participants agreed with VLT price: “Selling off development rights to land trusts is tightening the market for building lots and driving up the price,” whereas only ten people disagreed. Although the positive ratings were predominantly among Government Sceptics (average +1.9), there were six Greens who also agreed, bringing their average to -0.5. In his interview, Jackson made the point that the land trust has so encircled one village that the obvious places to develop are off the table, in effect forcing development into the countryside – this despite his general support of the land trust. For his part, Carleton, a Sceptic, vehemently opposes the very principle of easements conveying development rights, wondering why we think we should be allowed to control land use from beyond the grave. This concern with the “in perpetuity” clause came up in a number of other interviews, including those of some Greens. As the land trust moves to take on environmental issues more directly in its easements, it is likely that discontent will increase among Sceptics. Traditionally the land trust has been seen as primarily an advocate for the working landscape, maintaining some distance from purely environmental organizations like the Nature Conservancy. As that distance closes, the land trust risks losing support among farmers and other land-workers that advocate landowner autonomy.

The land trust’s “green” shift is just the latest step in a society-wide scrutiny of traditional agricultural and extractive practices. The organic farming movement has a long history in Vermont, setting itself up as an alternative to a conventional agriculture based on an industrial model dependent on chemical and other off-farm inputs. These two visions of agriculture have come into conflict frequently. Farmers using conventional methods often describe technology as creating an ever-expanding toolbox that sustains productivity gains necessary to feed the ever-increasing global population. Organic farmers tend to be more sceptical of the value of many of

\[\text{interviews with Darby Bradley (Feb 29, 2008) and John Roe (June 3, 2008) both of Vermont Land Trust.}\]
\[\text{For instance, Representative Norm McAllister castigates Vermont senators saying that they “seem to think the only form of agriculture worth their time or energy is organic farming. They have spent plenty of time and energy on that end, but very little on the over 90 percent of agriculture that is not organic” (St. Albans Messenger, May 4 2004).}\]
these tools and above all fears that they may have unintended impacts on human health and the environment.

In part these different perspectives can be seen as representing different diagnoses of a problem. The extent to which the food production system is seen to be broken differs between the two factor groups. The Green Governance group generally agreed both with the statements *food prod* -- “In the U.S.’s food production system, quality, nutrition and the environment are treated as less important than the economic bottom line” (+2.7) and *ag expl* -- “The agriculture system in the U.S. forces farmers to over-exploit the soil and their animals in order to survive” (+1.9). The Government Sceptics were more mixed; on *ag expl*, in particular, this group showed the widest in-group range of any question in the survey (st. dev. of 2.53 points for this group, factor average -0.6); on *food prod* the average was +0.9 with a still high standard deviation of 1.97 points. This range of perspectives shows that there is no simple model of the agricultural crisis in this group. While many blame the government for stifling entrepreneurship, there is also a submerged discourse that sees a culprit in the competition that is at the heart of a market economy.

The struggle over biotechnology is the most recent flare-up in the conflicts within agriculture. Organic advocates are extremely suspicious of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), feeling that they haven’t been tested fully enough to assure the public of their safety. Furthermore, they often cite information about business practices of biotech giant Monsanto, using underhanded tactics to get GMOs into the world food supply before the opposition can stop them. The fear of contamination is inflamed by the fact that genetic modifications can be virtually unstoppable once they are in the gene pool.

Those who support the right to use GMOs downplay the risks they posed and frame the issue as one where each group should do their part to coexist amicably and not try to impose their practices on the other side. As Flannery, a Government Sceptic, puts it: “It’s a matter of trying to get it so everybody can live in peace together amongst each other, without one group hurting the other, either way.” Anti-GMO activists dispute this framing, arguing that the impacts of using GMOs cannot be contained on a parcel of land the way the coexistence trope suggests.

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Interestingly, despite the fact that the issue had been very high profile in the media in the few years before the interviews, it only came up in two interviews, both of whom were farmers, suggesting that it hasn’t broken through to a place of prominence in the public consciousness.

Although there is a strong organic movement in Vermont, expressions of concern about the environmental impacts of conventional agriculture were rare in the interviews. It was more common for people to discuss pollution from poor manure management (which isn’t limited to conventional farms) than to discuss the effects of chemical use. The two interviews with active farmers were the only ones where these issues came up. The Collinses, who are organic farmers and Greens, discussed chemical use in the context of corporate domination of the industrial agriculture system as part of a more general diagnosis of the broken agriculture system. Flannery defends the use of the newest generation of chemicals, breaking into a description of the molecular composition of Round-up to demonstrate its harmlessness. On the other hand he does acknowledge that some of the older products have serious effects, but he says the real problem is with all the fertilizers and herbicides being used on lawns and golf course, where the rate of application is much higher.

According to Flannery, public perception frames farmers as the culprit – he complains that newcomers arrive in the state with no real idea about what it takes to run a farm. When they find out that the corn field beside them gets sprayed they get upset and begin to perceive effects that he says can’t possibly be due to the spraying. Nevertheless the climate of liability that has arisen makes him much more careful than he used to be. These perspectives link into typical government-sceptic views on newcomers as illustrated by their response to OOS ig (“Too many out-of-staters don’t understand the rural economy or way of life and propose land use controls that are inappropriate for Vermont.”) The group average is +3.0 and the standard deviation is lower than most questions at 0.86 points. In the interviews, I found newcomers sensitive to being perceived this way and often making significant efforts to avoid being cast as ignorant out-of-staters (see chapter 3).

On the other hand, some of the most critical statements about farmers came from the most recently arrived residents. The Konigs describe a neighbour as “the bad farmer”. Their dealings with him were the only time Arthur Konig felt someone was trying to take advantage of him as an outsider. They also note the poor upkeep of the farm buildings and vehicles. It’s interesting
to consider what motivates their concern – on the one hand there is a clear aesthetic component, but there is also concern about good management. In their discussion it is evident that they see management choices as having effects that concern the broader community. One issue is animal welfare – they are disturbed that another farmer’s practice of docking the tails of his cows leaves them defenceless against flies. They also describe the environmental impacts of heavy cutting and clearing that the second farmer undertook, noting that erosion and siltation were problems on neighbours’ properties.

These complaints highlight the thorny issues that come up around land use oversight. The specific environmental concerns they raise are a grey area for most people in Vermont. Cutting trees or making new farm fields are actions that will generally find broad support, but there are ways of pursuing these actions that will peel some of that support away. The complaint that the farmer is “brutal” in his approach to the land, that he wrings money out of it, is a concern that is heard mostly among the Greens. Lines watches farmers he knows planting their fields in corn year after year, aware that the heavy demands of the crop are progressively impoverishing the soil. But concerns about over-exploitation are also a submerged thread in the Government Sceptic group. It is the response to such excesses that differs sharply from one group to the other. The Sceptics seek as much as possible to avoid bringing the powers of the state to bear, where the Greens are much more willing to exercise public oversight. The difference between these preferred responses will be discussed more fully in the section on governance below.

For many, the organic movement represents an effort to shift agriculture to a more sustainable model. In discussing the vision of what they’d like to see Vermont look like in the future, many expressed excitement at the diversification of agriculture in the state often tying it to organic production practices. What is sometimes overlooked in this vision is the fact that an agricultural economy is made up of interdependent pieces. One of the biggest concerns is the loss of a critical mass of farmers so that many of the support industries such as veterinarians or machinery sales and service do not have a customer base to survive. The loss of the conventional dairy industry in Vermont would be a major blow to farming of all kinds. And yet, does that mean that it should be “artificially” sustained? Some among the Sceptics certainly argued that the time for farming in Vermont may have come and gone and there are other land uses ready to take its
place. Most participants, including many Sceptics, however are not ready for such an eventuality and are willing to see some public effort made to sustain the industry.

There is a broad commitment to agriculture in the state, notwithstanding the undercurrent of resentment for the purported special treatment farmers receive. Many people in both groups highly prize the agricultural heritage of the state. The differences between the groups are most apparent when the question is raised of whether and how to defend that heritage. Some conservation targets garner more support than others, for instance, the conservation of agricultural land was prioritized more highly than saving small farms. The statement \textit{sv ag soils} ("It is important to protect Vermont’s prime agricultural soils by keeping development off of them") received notable support from both groups (Greens +2.8, Sceptics +1.5). Saving small farms widened the gap between the two groups (\textit{sv sm farms}: “It is important to protect small farms and prevent them from being swallowed up by larger farms” – Greens +2.5, Sceptics +0.3). In both cases, it is worth noting that the Sceptics’ average did not dip into the negative territory, remaining at worst neutral on the conservation issues. This reflects the fact that although they have serious reservations about government action, they frequently still value the targets of conservation highly.

Overall, agricultural issues bring out some of the differences between the factor groups but in many cases there is a striking range of opinions within the groups. Apart from farmers, much of the awareness of agricultural issues was centred on land tenure and use, rather than on more technical concerns like chemical pollution or biotechnology. Nevertheless, farmers are central enough to the Vermont imaginary that most participants have stances on the broad issues of agricultural sustainability, such that these concerns feed into the social divisions manifest in the factor groups and translated into cultural complexes.

6.2 Forestry

Vermont’s forests have seen more than a century of sustained growth. In the late 1800s, at the height of the sheep boom, forests occupied only about a third of the state’s land; by the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, they covered 78% of the state (Wharton et al., 2003). Not only has the area covered by forest increased but the volume of timber has steadily risen as individual trees
increase in size. In the last three decades of the 20th century, growing stock increased from 5 billion cubic feet (1973) to 8.7 billion (1997), with valuable sugar maple making up almost 2 billion of that (Wharton et al., 2003). During the last decade of the century, the rate of growth exceeded the rate of removal by nearly 2 to 1. While these numbers might suggest that Vermont can significantly increase the level of wood harvest without unduly impacting the state of the forests, a number of questions remain about what constitutes sustainable forestry practice. Increasing the intensity of use in the forests generates opposition in some quarters. Conservation biology increasingly asserts the importance of coarse woody debris on the forest floor as part of a cycle of decomposition and nutrient cycling (Jonsson and Kruys, 2001). With the growing interest in biomass as a fuel source, there is some concern that an unsustainable amount of material will be taken out of the forests resulting in a deeper disruption of nutrient cycling and decomposition.66 Major shifts in the utilization of the forest resource may be on the horizon, but the outcome of those shifts is still up in the air.

The place of the forest industry in people’s vision of Vermont is less secure than agriculture, but more secure than one might suspect. The participants in my interviews accepted extraction of forest products for human use to a striking extent. The question in the survey that most directly addresses this topic was formulated to be polemical: *tmb prod* states “Since Vermont is a place where timber can be sustainably produced, it’s our responsibility to use a significant part of our woodlands for timber production.” Even when framed as an imperative, the statement only drew a single negative response – Margaret Price, the most ardent environmentalist of the sample, who gave it a -2. The most common response was simple agreement (+2). Surprisingly, the difference between the two factor groups was less than a point. Overall, this seems to indicate a sense that the careful exploitation of forest resources has an important place in the state’s economy.

Individually, some equally striking stances arose in a number of the interviews. Perhaps most interesting was the extent to which two recently arrived couples, the Chisholms and the Konigs, embraced the idea of managing their woodlands. Arthur Konig puts it eloquently “I also get a good deal of enjoyment out of feeling that I am managing our woodlands in a reasonable way,

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that keeps them looking and being healthy, that doesn’t just let them go to seed.” His choice of metaphor is interesting because it incorporates the idea of a crop that goes unharvested and is thereby wasted. This is a common perspective within the forestry sector – a feeling of outrage, even, that a perfectly good resource is left to fall on the ground and rot. But Konig is also asserting that the forest is healthier for being managed; he describes his observation that his woodland weathered outbreaks of spruce budworm better than parcels that were managed in a preservation mode. The Chisholms are even more dramatic converts to forest management, as described in the previous chapter.

Lines, a newcomer and an environmentalist, is another example of someone whose embrace of logging and the forest industry comes as a surprise.

There was a really bad logging development that happened down the road here, and I see some other things that are like “sheesh, it looks like they devastated it.” Well, anytime you go in and log […] it looks horrible. But in five years, or even a year, it’s greened up quite a bit. Having open land like that is actually a benefit for a lot of things, whether it’s wildlife and the new habitat – essentially you’re mimicking a windblow or a forest fire or something like that. And so to have that open land is more important than the logging part. And actually the logging part is good because it allows people to maintain a livelihood. Obviously there’s better ways to do it and worse ways to do it, but then you’re splitting hairs, in a lot of regards, in my opinion.

Lines’ conclusion, that distinguishing good from bad logging practices is “splitting hairs,” is hardly a stereotypical environmentalist perspective. These examples show how deeply the valuing of the working landscape has percolated into public consciousness in the state. Nevertheless, people who load strongly on the government-sceptic factor, particularly those most concerned about the arrival of newcomers, perceive less and less support for traditional land practices such as logging.

Aside from questions of public support, the forest industry faces some serious challenges in Vermont at the beginning of the 21st century. As the global market continues to find new sources of raw materials and new locations for manufacturing, Vermont companies struggle to maintain their historical position (Vermont Forest Products Council, n.d.). One of the biggest blows of the last decades has been the withdrawal of the pulp and paper industry from the north-eastern United States, capitalizing on government support, cheaper materials and cheaper labour in
locations like Brazil and China (Collins, 2007; Global Production, 2008). Employment in paper manufacturing has dropped precipitously in the past decade, falling by 44% from 1999 to 2009 (Vermont Labor Market Information, 2011). Not only does this represent the loss of a significant source of employment, it means that there is no longer a buyer for trees that don’t meet the quality standards for sawlogs. Biomass (more technologically advanced uses of wood as fuel) has been slow to arrive in the region despite initial enthusiasm (Edwards, 2009). Landowners have fewer merchantable resources to draw on; the return to high-grading (cutting only the best wood) begins to look inevitable, leaving the forest in progressively worse condition from a forestry perspective.  

This is just one piece of the picture. Global suppliers are also putting pressure on sawmills, as places like Siberia come on line as major production centres. Not only are mills finding their lumber undersold, they are also facing competition for their materials. Vermont logs are exported in quantity to mills in nearby states and provinces, and in some cases to destinations as far away as Asia. Vermont, along with other states in the north-eastern U.S., has long traded on the quality of its hardwoods. Increasingly, however middle-class consumers are showing themselves to be less concerned about premium woods or even brands and more focused on price.

These trends have combined to put Vermont’s entire forest products industry in a precarious position. Within the industry, sub-sectors have responded quite differently. The most active response came from the wood product manufacturers, who have worked hard to identify market niches (particularly among upper-income consumers) and branding strategies to keep themselves afloat. Banding together and working with state government, the manufacturers formed the Vermont Wood Products Manufacturing Council in 2002. One of their strategies has been to specifically advertise the source of the wood, highlighting sustainable production and certification but also marketing it using the place associations of the “Vermont brand.” At the time of this research (2008), Vermont wood product manufacturers had managed to buck the

68 De Geus, 2008.
declining trend of New England manufacturing by showing an 11% growth rate over the previous 4 years.\textsuperscript{70}

The sawmill sector has been less successful. A series of events related to poor markets for lumber and sustained periods of bad weather left many Vermont mills with no cash reserves and teetering on the edge of bankruptcy by 2008.\textsuperscript{71} Between 2002 and 2008, the number of mills in Vermont declined by 43%; from 2000 to 2008 the amount of wood processed by forest products businesses dropped by 37% (Vermont Center for Rural Development, 2011). The interpretation of the difficulties facing the sawmill industry vary considerably depending on who you talk to. Some say that sawmill operators have been unwilling to consider new arrangements, to rise to the challenge of more flexible production and a new business model that focuses on closer contact with the end users of their product rather than a reliance on timber brokers.\textsuperscript{72} Others blame constraints on businesses limiting their ability to compete, pointing to issues like high rates for workers compensation insurance and the loss of access to large tracts of public land.\textsuperscript{73}

One of the big constraints that Jeff Metcalfe mentioned is increasing competition for stumpage (the right to cut timber on a parcel of land). Logs are in increasing demand; Metcalfe mentions pressure from Quebec mills. At the same time he says that reduced logging in the Green Mountain National Forest has forced big mills in the area to look elsewhere for sources. Metcalfe describes timber sales with 15 to 20 participants where they used to have 5 to 10. In the process he says smaller logging operations are being forced out and individual loggers end up representing mills rather than themselves at the sales. Richard LaChance points to the price volatility of the sector, where log prices got extremely high as competition increased and then fell by 50% in the course of a couple of months as confidence flagged and brokers started to worry that there was too much inventory.

This type of volatility is what leads Bob De Geus, the wood utilization specialist at the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, to call for a model that is based less on timber brokers and competition on the open market and based more on developing relationships along the whole

\textsuperscript{70} De Geus, 2008.
\textsuperscript{71} De Geus, 2008.
\textsuperscript{72} De Geus, 2008; Reported by Costello, 2008.
\textsuperscript{73} Ed Larson, May 20, 2008, Vermont Forest Products Association.
length of the commodity chain. The idea is to have manufacturers working with mills and even foresters to ensure a consistent supply of high quality wood that fits their specific manufacturing needs. This approach builds on the name recognition of Vermont and its association with green business, incorporating the primary sector into some of the successes that the manufacturing sector has realized.

The model has some common features with certification more generally. LaChance raises some concerns about certification that might be relevant to this model as well – in particular the expense associated with tracking commodities as they move along the chain of custody, and the expense of getting mills certified. Interestingly, he sees this as something that the state might take over to streamline the process and reduce the expense, provided it didn’t become too cumbersome.

In describing the problems facing the mills, Metcalfe emphasized the reduced access to timber resources on public lands. LaChance also highlights the same problem, focusing in particular on the fact that very little has been cut on state lands since the 1980s. LaChance describes this as the effect of a generational shift within Vermont’s Agency of Natural Resources, where the new generation embraces a more preservationist perspective on state lands. He finds the lack of action since the election of Republican governor Jim Douglas in 2002 particularly disappointing, especially since the head of the Department of Forest Parks and Recreation was a forester and former mill employee. This is striking because it’s one of the places where LaChance takes stances that are much more in line with the Government Sceptic factor than the Green Governance one.

The issue of preservationism inevitably leads to the most divisive issue on forest management in the past decades, the question of wilderness. The heart of this conflict is how to balance different demands made on Vermont’s public forest resources. To some extent this is a question of differences in the degree to which various land uses (and those dependant on those uses) are valued, for instance habitat for game animals versus for endangered species. In addition, the conflict derives from different causal models of the consequences of various actions on the land. The wide range of responses to the positively/ factually worded question *wild ecos* (“Wilderness areas are necessary because even carefully managed timber operations have some negative impact on the ecosystem”) illustrates these different models well. The spread between the
Greens’ average response of +2.0 and the Sceptics’ of -1.4 is among the greatest in the survey. The Greens tend to feel that while a working forest can minimize its impacts on an ecosystem, there are still species that are sensitive even to this level of management and need wilderness. Sceptics are more likely to argue that wilderness is unnecessary.

The details of these positions are apparent in the interviews. Metcalfe claims that forestry operations can be practiced in a way that mimics all the critical natural processes, for instance by cutting trees but leaving them on the ground to create the coarse woody debris that is important for cover and for decomposition cycles. Cartwright lays out another common argument against unmanaged wilderness. He points out that in a mature forest, the floor of the forest receives too little light for much to grow so that terrestrial herbivores face severely restricted food sources in comparison to early successional forest. This is of particular concern to the hunting community, since many of the important game animals fall into this category. From the other side, Margaret Price views the situation from the perspective of forest birds, which she says face increased predation when clearings are cut into forests for grouse or other animals that like open or edge habitat. These differences highlight the complexity of a forest ecosystem, where any changes will benefit some species to the detriment of others. The importance placed on the survival of individual species partly depends on people’s activities and the values derived from them. But it also depends on whether they have adopted causal models that view biodiversity as a critical factor in maintaining environmental processes.

Opponents of wilderness are often sceptical of conservation biology and the prescriptions that derive from it. Carleton expresses a criticism that has been levelled at ecology in the past – that it proceeds as though there is a static baseline, a climax community, that the landscape would settle into in the absence of human intervention (Botkin, 1990). “They have this utopic, [Paleolithic] desire for something prehistoric that just doesn’t exist and probably never will again. They keep saying, for instance, we’ve got to save Vermont. Well, I say pick a date. We going to start pre-civil war? Post civil war? Or post WWII? What date do you want to go back to?”

Bowen expresses a scepticism towards science that arrives at quite different conclusions than Carleton. He recognizes that science is not infallible, that you can’t always know what the outcome of a decision will be. He does feel that scientifically defined limits need to be placed on resource use in many cases, but he recognizes that public need will ultimately outweigh
environmental benefit: “As a society we will always put public health and safety and welfare ahead of a given environmental issue.” The role of science is important but can’t be absolute.

Another objection raised to the passive management that wilderness designation prescribes is that allowing trees to just fall over is wasteful and even potentially dangerous. Scorn is clear in the expression many people use of trees “left to blow over” or “left to rot” (Tremblays, Cartwright, Metcalfe, Carleton). This speaks to a sense that the two main ways a tree is valuable is as a growing organism or as source material for the wood products industry. If pressed, most of these people will accept some need for fallen trees in the forest, but their general inclination is to get the trees processed. An additional argument for avoiding deadwood in the forest is the increased risk of forest fires, though some admit that the threat this poses in Vermont’s wet climate is not comparable to places like Idaho.

Wilderness is clearly a very divisive issue, as can be seen in the survey as well as in the conflicts that have arisen around passive management on public lands, such as the Champion lands and the Green Mountain National Forest. But the strands of the issue leading to divisiveness need to be teased out. Although it is often presented that way, hostility toward the idea of wilderness cannot be taken as a proxy for anti-environmental sentiment. Metcalfe, for instance, gives both wilderness questions a -4, but in his interview he displays a notable willingness to embrace forestry practices that reduce the ecological impacts of extraction. He decries rapacious logging in parts of the world that have no environmental regulations.

So what is it about wilderness that raises the ire of people who cannot be described as anti-environmentalists? For one answer we have to look at the process by which passive management is prescribed. Taking the Champion Land deal as an example, the purchase, the writing of easements and of the subsequent management plan were the product of a process that involved only superficial consultation with the public, in the sense that the management direction was set by a legally binding easement before the meetings took place (Metcalfe’s interview, Young, 2009). Key players in this process have admitted that in retrospect this was a mistake;74

74 Roe, 2008
it inflamed local hostility and fed into a narrative that wilderness was being imposed by an outside group with special influence over the state.

This raises a second issue connecting to wilderness. Many opponents specifically refer to wilderness as elitist. They see it as a management approach that favours uses of the land that are commonly pursued by outlanders, particularly hiking. Wilderness is figured as an approach that turns its back on locals. Tremblay described his interactions with a wealthy landowner when he offered to clean up thirty acres of blown down spruce; he paraphrases the landowner’s response—“No. I don’t give a shit.” He says some people are afraid of anyone else making any money. “If they think you can make a dollar – let it rot.” Whether Tremblay’s characterization is accurate or not, it certainly conveys the feeling that wilderness takes aim at the livelihoods of locals.

Vermont’s forests have been an important part of rural life for most of its history as a state, as a source of resources but also as a setting for experiences that play a defining role in many people’s identities (Albers, 2000). Attachment to the forests is intense. People have spent a lot of time in the forests observing, and as a result they have built up a substantial local body of knowledge. This knowledge often conflicts with the scientific knowledge produced by conservation biologists. It is important to realize that both bodies of knowledge have commitments that influence the facts that they recognize as foundational. When maximum biodiversity is your preeminent goal you operate differently than when a robust forest economy is the goal. This is particularly apparent when questions of risk come up, with one side willing to run a risk that the other finds unacceptable.

Although I found that some newcomers showed an unexpectedly deep interest in the forest industry, the specific challenges facing the industry were discussed almost entirely by people who worked in it. In general Vermonter’s probably have a sharper awareness of forestry issues than many, but Richard LaChance’s view that this industry is an underground economy still resonates. Within my sample, there is a decided propensity for people employed in the industry

75 John Roe of the Vermont Land Trust argues that ecology is a different kind of science than chemistry – given their experiences in nature, rural residents are more likely to feel they have expertise in ecology.
to adopt a government-sceptic perspective. Of the six people involved in the industry in a professional capacity, four of them are Sceptics. Still, the views of LaChance and Moore – the two who load on the Green Governance factor – show that even within the industry there is a range of perspectives. And indeed, even among Sceptics there is a range of views about what sorts of practices and governance arrangements are appropriate.

In this discussion it is important to recognize that some of the disagreement over appropriate governance boils down to the appropriate balance to strike among social goods. This avoids the dead end of seeing people who work in the forest industry as hostile to the environment. The fact that they put a heavy emphasis on livelihood issues does not mean that they do not value the environment. At the same time, they are likely to bring particular scrutiny to policies that pursue environmental protection by constraining the forestry industry. Because of the complexity of some of the arguments about ecology, this scrutiny may at times fall back on common sense or traditional perspectives that are unreceptive to conservation experts. This lack of receptivity is exacerbated by the divisions between the cultural complexes, particularly in settings such as public hearings where antagonistic models prevail (see Kemmis, 1990).^76

### 6.3 Residential development

Vermont’s working landscape faces threats from many sides. Competition and pressures within the agriculture and forest products sectors certainly have taken a toll. At the same time, many of the threats facing the working landscape come from other sectors. One of the most significant is the competition for land with residential development.

Residences have always been a feature of the working landscape in Vermont, particularly in the case of agriculture. There has never been a hard and fast division between land uses. However, in the past residences were tied to the productive functions of the land; for the most part, the same people working the land lived in the houses. Of course, it’s easy to overstate this integration of home and work – vacation homes in Vermont for instance go back well over a

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^76 This antagonism was visible in hearings over the management plans for the Champion lands, where conservation biologists describe themselves as stunned by the ridicule their arguments faced. (Roe, 2008).
As more land is devoted to purely residential uses, the impacts on the working landscape begin to be felt (Fidel, 2007). The most obvious impact is the fact that the land a house occupies cannot be farmed or, if it’s in the forest, can only be logged once, when the building site is prepared. The impact extends beyond the house’s footprint, though, since most houses develop a certain part of their surroundings into lawns, gardens or other landscaping. Even more far-reaching is the fact that many homeowners feel that they have a stake in what happens on land beyond this immediate landscaped environment. Part of the lure of living in the countryside is the natural surroundings, and these are imagined in a way that leaves little room for the machinery that is a central feature of current farming and forestry practices. Although homeowners may not make extensive, day-to-day use of the forestland surrounding their home site, they may still experience logging activity in it as a serious degradation of their living environment. Farm activity faces a more differentiated reception since agriculture is such a prominent component of Vermont’s pastoral image. Low intensity uses like pastures are welcomed by many homeowners. However, standard practices on even such benign uses as hayfields can create tensions – the spreading of manure on hayfields as fertilizer is the most commonly cited example of the “reality” of farming intruding on the image that newcomers bring with them. As Flannery points out, the tensions only increase when issues like spraying pesticides on cornfields or planting genetically modified crops arise.

These conflicts have been addressed partially through so called right-to-farm laws in Vermont and elsewhere. These establish certain practices as legally permitted and therefore not subject to challenges under nuisance law. A political battle over right-to-farm legislation was fought in 2004. Opponents argued that right-to-farm legislation created loopholes that allowed industrial farming to escape regulatory oversight. Supporters replied that farmers were vulnerable to suits from newcomers who don’t understand country living (Page, 2004). Ultimately legislation set in place a rebuttable presumption that impacts stemming from a farm’s “normal operations” are not grounds for a nuisance suit (Gram, 2004).
their practices (Walker and Fortmann, 2003). Residents who don’t work the land have no expectation of earning money from their homestead. Instead the homestead is perceived as an asset that one purchases and maintains from other sources of income. In effect, this land use is subsidized by productive activity elsewhere in the economy. By contrast, the income of land workers is directly tied to the value of goods produced from the land relative to the expenses needed for production. The importance of this difference centres on the fact that for the working landscape there are thresholds beyond which it no longer makes sense to try to produce goods on the land, while for residential land uses no such thresholds exist. In other words, the amount that a homeowner can pay for a house site is not limited by the return he or she expects to get. Instead, it is a function of the size of the homeowner’s savings and income and of his or her attachment to the property in question. So homesites with the right attributes can fetch sums well beyond the means of anyone hoping to produce something from the same land. This is most strikingly revealed in the change in value that comes with the simple act of subdividing a larger parcel into lots for homebuilding – smaller parcels have a higher per acre value, compounded by the fact that the rate at which the values grow is higher for small acreages (Fidel, 2007).

As noted in the previous chapter, the competition for land with wealthy newcomers was a remarkably common complaint among locals in the interviews. Metcalfe exemplifies the sentiment when he describes what he’s heard about the land market – that people can sell a house on a tiny lot in Connecticut and then come up and with the same money buy a very nice house on a few hundred acres. In such a situation the newcomers may not even see themselves as wealthy, having lived a modest life elsewhere while their assets appreciated to put them in a commanding position in Vermont markets. This felicitous situation for the newcomers is a calamity to Vermonters who find themselves priced out of the market for housing and housesites. A number of interview participants confided their fears about displacement – the Tremblays, for instance, were considering a move to a town along the Canadian border where they could get a home for $50,000-60,000. Of perhaps greater concern was the fate of the next generation. Angela Morton was thankful her father had the foresight to buy land when it was cheap because it allowed her to pass lots on to her children that she didn’t think they’d be able to afford otherwise.

People like Angela Morton who have inherited land aren’t faced with the problems of market competition that those seeking to buy housesites are. But the actual price of land is only one of
the pressures that displaces lower-income Vermonters from their home communities. Property
taxes have been on a steady upward trend for at least the last decade, fuelled by increasing
property values and changes in the education funding system (Saas, 2007).

The drivers of the increase in tax rates are not always easy to determine. A significant
proportion of property taxes goes to fund education. In 1997, Vermont passed legislation to
reform its education funding system by shifting from a local system where each town raised the
funds for its school budget (with some state grant assistance) to a state-wide system where
property taxes are pooled and then redistributed to schools. Reform was mandated by a Vermont
Supreme Court decision ruling that the local system deprived some children of equal educational
opportunity because they lived in towns without the tax base to sustain a robust school system.77
The new system evened out tax rates but used very complex formulas to do so. As a result it
becomes very hard to trace the causes of the rising taxes (Saas, 2007, p. 11). Different causal
models identify different culprits, including rising property values state-wide, rising educational
costs, and disincentives to restrain spending.

One of the effects of high property tax rates is that simply holding onto land requires a
continuous infusion of money. As an asset, land is not only non-liquid but also absorbs liquid
assets, particularly as it increases in value. When there is a crisis in income, for instance when a
household member loses a job, or when a major expense arises, landowners often seek ways to
cash in some of the value of their land. Understandably, when the land has been passed down in
the family, many landowners are reluctant to sell it. Subdivision is a common alternative,
specifically, hiving off parcels and selling them as the need arises. As Jackson asks rhetorically,
“How can you afford to own land without selling some of it for development to pay for the piece
you want to keep?”

The state of Vermont has set up a number of programs over the years to try to reduce the tax
burden on individual home and land owners. Particularly important is the current use program
(officially known as Use Value Appraisal). This program reduces the taxes paid by land owners

77 Even worse, poor towns had to pay much higher taxes than wealthy towns to raise much lower per pupil funds.
“In 2001, the Vermont Department of Education reported that in 1997, tax rates in Vermont ranged from a low of
$0.12 per $100 of property value to fund per-pupil local education spending level of $12,300 to a high of $2.28 per
$100 of value to fund $7,850 in spending” (Saas, 2007).
on farm- or forest-land that is in active use. Rather than calculating taxes based on the market value of the land (i.e., what the land could fetch if carved up by a developer and sold as parcels), the program substitutes a “use value” which is arrived at by assessing the revenue producing potential of agricultural and forest land across the state. In return for this tax break, landowners cannot develop the land without paying a penalty. If they sell the land, the lien from being in current use goes with the land. Equally important is the requirement that the land be managed for production. This program is widely credited with preventing a massive collapse of the agricultural and forest products economies in Vermont\textsuperscript{78}. Admittedly both have been struggling for a variety of reasons even so, but without the current use program there is little doubt that the situation would be much more bleak. The program also plays a crucial role in mitigating the displacement that property taxes would otherwise entail.

The current use program does raise some controversy. There are people who don’t want to enrol their land in it because of the oversight of management choices and the restrictions it imposes. Others see it as a tax dodge for large landowners that don’t want to pay the full carrying costs of owning the land, often implying that the ones who benefit most from it are relatively wealthy (out-of-state) land owners. They argue that the program reduces the tax base, leaving those paying full taxes with a heavier burden.

Both the current use program and the acts reforming educational funding aim to redistribute the property tax burden more equitably or to line up with broader social values such as the maintenance of the working landscape. These objectives can be contentious as there is no agreement about what an equitable distribution of burdens and benefits would look like. At the broadest level, there is disagreement about whether education should be funded by a tax on property at all, with some serious proposals advanced to switch over to an income tax\textsuperscript{79}. Arsenault suggests that the practice of appraising working land at its market value should be

\textsuperscript{78} For more detail see the annual report of the 2009 Department of Property Valuation and Review: “With the 2008 tax year, an estimated 58.9\% of the potentially eligible agricultural land and an estimated 40.4\% of the potentially eligible forest land is now enrolled. The combined enrolled land represents 34.5\% of the total land area of the state (p. 25).” Also the Brighton report on the program calculates that of the $19.4 million in pre-tax earnings of Vermont’s dairy farms, $9.4 million of that would be required to pay property taxes on land currently enrolled in the UVA program (Brighton et al. 2007, p. 14).

\textsuperscript{79} Ed Larson (a lobbyist for the Vermont Forest Products Association) made the interesting comment that they like the property tax because it hurts to pay it and it therefore provides incentive to keep spending in check.
generalized to the whole tax system (which would imply abolishing the restrictions that come with the tax breaks).

The tax burden presents a continuous challenge to property owners trying to make ends meet. The other side of the burden that taxes represent is the accumulation of asset value. For many owners of enterprises that work the land, investments made over the years often go into property. Long term planning for eventualities such as retirement or a child’s university education often depends on the ability to liquefy land assets, so that land comes to be thought of as a kind of bank account. People’s working lives, decades long, may have been planned around the value of the land and the right to dispose of it. Alvin Moore, a forestland owner with a major maple sugaring operation, describes the thinking behind “investing” in land:

[M]ost of us who manage our land for a livelihood don’t have a whole hell of a lot left over except our land when we’re all done and so it’s an important financial asset. Historically inflation’s been a farmer’s best friend. You borrow with what are expensive dollars at the time and pay back with cheap dollars as inflation kicks in and your land gets worth more. Or you leverage the hell out of it for some more. […] One of the reasons people work so darn hard on a piece of land is because when they’re all done they have the equity, they may not have had much during the time they were doing it but… [trails off].

This expectation to be able to cash in land assets when the need arises is one of the biggest factors in Sceptics’ opposition to land use regulations. Several participants painted scenarios of planning for retirement by investing in land only to have those plans dashed when a new set of regulations comes into effect. Kingsbury’s example has someone’s retirement plans disrupted by the Endangered Species Act, but he also objects to local zoning that has the same effect. At the same time for some people it is immaterial whether the investment is for retirement or simply as a way to make a living. For them, developers don’t have the bad name that they do in other circles. So Cartwright gives the example of a developer who buys land to build a motel but gets stymied by zoning changes. Cartwright’s sympathy lies with the developer, against sudden rule changes.

This issue, more than the others I have examined so far in this section, raises conflicting feelings within individuals. Just as the attachment to the working landscape is widely shared, so are concerns about the broad effects of residential development. Cartwright expresses this conflict poignantly when I ask him about watching pastures where he grew up turn into house sites: “I
hate to see it, of course, yeah. You know. I do. But it’s inevitable.” The sense of inevitability is strong in many of the Sceptics’ interviews – the feeling that it is unwise to develop too strong an attachment to any state of affairs. In response to my question of what he’d like to see Vermont look like 20 or 30 years in the future, Cartwright says “Of course, that goes back to land use planning and I don’t want to be that person.” Cartwright illustrates his point recalling the town of Morrisville twenty years ago, describing the site where the carnival used to set up and where the drive-in movie theatre was. “If you would have been there 30 years ago and asked somebody that same question they would have said, ‘Well, I’d like to see that meadow kept open and the drive-in theater’ – she’s a-gone.” And on the other side of the equation is the fact that some of the new development is seen as good or at least necessary. Cartwright points out that many of the houses that have gone in on his road belong to his own siblings. Others point out the need for affordable housing.

There is also considerable sympathy for people who treat land as an asset among people loading on the Green Governance factor. Although the overriding concern is with protecting the traditional landscape and the environment, a number of people in this group are troubled by issues of unfairness raised by the loss of value when land is rezoned. Erica Keller cautions about the effects of failing to see the big picture when pursuing conservation objectives.

And it is very tempting to sit on the outside and say, that farm should always be a farm, but how do you help them be a farm when their retirement or their kid’s college education is wrapped up in the sale of 15 acres - would make the difference between them being comfortable and them being really uncomfortable in their lives.

Keller struggles to balance her broader conservation objectives with the individual livelihood needs of people working the land. Ken Lines voices similar ambivalence, specifically with regard to zoning bylaws:

Part of it is, Gosh how can you do that? Mr. [Murray’s] field – that’s where we want future development so he can go sell as much as he wants in tiny parcels, but Mr. [Libby] up the hill - forget it, we’re not going to allow it. Sheesh. Very socialist [small laugh] in that regard – top down. So, I actually have some problems with that type of guidance.

The survey question fin asset throws these ambivalences into relief. On the face of it, it’s a fairly straightforward statement – “Too many people treat land as a financial asset and are quick to subdivide and sell off lots.” For people who are concerned about residential sprawl this would
seem to identify a clear culprit. Indeed even Lines and Keller give it positive ratings despite the concerns they raise in their interviews (+4 and +2 respectively). However, perhaps because it foregrounds individual landowners, a number of respondents made comments defending the decision and arguing that people are forced into it by rising taxes. The ratings themselves also show some ambivalence particularly in the Government Sceptic factor, with responses ranging from +4 to -2. A surprise on the Green Governance side is Margaret Price, who departs from her uncompromising preservationism to give this statement a -1.

Catherine Goodman is an illuminating case here. She admits before the survey that she isn’t up on a lot of the issues and her responses generally stay fairly neutral. With this in mind, her response to *fin asset* stands out as one of the four negatives she assigned (all at -1) and the only one where she departed from the Green Governance factor. Upon rating the question, she commented that some people are forced to sell off their land because of taxes, and that where land used to be a sound investment it has become a burden to maintain. This fits into an overall position that is very attached to the traditional agricultural landscape of Vermont and wants to see it conserved, but is also deeply sympathetic to the livelihood challenges locals face.

At first sight, residential development has all the makings of the perfect litmus test to separate out Greens from Sceptics. From one perspective residential sprawl has been widely criticized for the effects it has on the landscape and communities (Champlain Initiative, 1999). From the other perspective residential development represents an alternative economic option that provides income to land owners and housing for consumers. In the end, however, these two perspectives turn out not to be mutually exclusive. Neither of the two factor groups has pure perspectives. It is important to recognize these impurities. The Greens have sympathy for people with their assets tied up in land trying to make ends meet. The Sceptics are not blind to the negative impacts of residential development. Both groups acknowledge to some extent that this kind of development produces genuine dilemmas. At the root of the dilemma, each group adopts different governance approaches with their own ordering of the priority of public goods. I will return to this issue at the end of the chapter.
6.4 Hunting and Recreation

Hunting is an oddly positioned practice in Vermont. My evidence of its role in the cultural complex is mixed and inconclusive. The hunting community has been an important wellspring of activism challenging big government; for example, the Vermont Traditions Coalition grew out of the sporting community during the Champion Lands conflict to contest the management direction set by the state government. While links between hunting and Government Sceptic-type politics are widely assumed in Vermont, my sample for this research actually yielded slightly more hunters in the Green Governance factor group than in the Government Sceptic group (5 to 4). This should caution us about assuming too close a connection between hunting and political conservatism (small government). Adding another wrinkle is the fact that of the nine hunters in my sample only one was a newcomer. Based on this admittedly small sample, hunting then starts to look like a practice associated with Vermonter, aligning relatively well with residential status. Other states obviously have hunting communities as well, so we should expect some of the newcomers to be hunters, but it’s possible that the non-hunters are a more mobile community, or that Vermont is a place that attracts non-hunting newcomers more than hunters. All of this is speculative and would need further investigation with a larger sample.

In general, it’s remarkable how little opposition I found to hunting in my interviews. Many non-hunters expressed their tolerance or even support of hunting. Daniels stands out for actively encouraging hunting out of his dislike for deer (“rats with long legs”), but many other non-hunting landowners were happy to allow hunting on their land. The only people with strong negative feelings were the Konigs and even they weren’t fully opposed. Marianne Konig’s position on hunting stems from an ideological position against the National Rifle Association and against guns. Arthur Konig is more accepting of hunting, provided the hunters use what they kill. Both of them are very opposed to bear hunting, particularly because of the use of dogs to hound the bear. It was interesting to note that Arthur justified his opposition to bear hunting with the claim that his is a widely shared position in the community, including among hunters. And he contrasts bear hunting with what he sees as more traditional hunting, of which he approves. Overall, they express some of the fears of hunters (and hunting dogs) that Locals tend to ridicule in newcomers, but they also show a willingness to accommodate some hunting as well.
Many of the hunters see hunting as under threat from the fears newly arrived landowners bring with them. Patrick Hall describes how he thinks many newcomers imagine hunting:

See, they come in from New York or Connecticut or something, and a lot of them come right out of the city area and they want privacy and they just close their land. And a lot of people, they don’t know much about hunting or trapping so they’re against it, they see something on television, some “anti” show or something and it turns them right off. They think people are out there salivating out of their mouth and frothing, ready to kill everything that comes down the street, or something.

It’s interesting to compare Hall’s interview with the Konigs’. Hall’s picture is part of his explanation of why so much land is now posted against hunting – he says the land still open to hunting probably isn’t 50% of what it was 20 or 30 years ago. The Konigs are considering posting their land because they plan to spend more time on it than they have in the past. Their views of hunters are certainly more nuanced than Hall imagines, though they still do have a strongly negative impression of the types of people that hunt bears. Their reasons for posting do stem from concerns with their safety – Arthur mentions returning abruptly from walks when he hears a pack of hunting dogs in the woods nearby. Those rare experiences are enough to make posting seem necessary. Hall says that most hunters are conservative (meaning well-behaved) but there are a few bad apples. From his perspective it makes sense to ignore the bad apples, but for the Konigs, their behaviour is enough to make them close their land. They don’t take that decision lightly, however, and worry that it will strain their relationships with some of their neighbours.

Posting is an issue that comes up again and again in interviews and is nearly always chalked up to newcomers, whether because they are fearful or because they are possessive about their land.

Traditionally Vermont is – I grew up and nobody posted their land, in my lifetime, in the late 70s early 80s when I was a teenager hunting no one posted their land, I mean, literally no one and if you did post, you were an SOB. It certainly was not well received if you posted your property. And that’s the way it was. So in 25 years it has changed dramatically. – Jackson

That attitude comes with this new generation of well financed people, that they need to buy that 200 acres or 10 acres, and the first thing they need to do is protect it, from they aren’t sure what, but they want to protect it. – Carleton
What makes posting a very interesting issue is that it pits two stances against each other that are generally both associated with Locals. On the one hand, maintaining access to hunting lands is, along with all things hunting, predominantly viewed as a Local concern. But so is a strong defence of private property rights. In general Government Sceptics resolved this tension by stating that landowners should voluntarily let people on their land to hunt; it was their right not to do so, but if they didn’t, they were seen as anti-social (or worse). Feelings were a bit more mixed when it comes to Vermont’s strong access rights, which require a landowner to go to some lengths in order to post his or her land against trespassing. Some supported them but others felt that you should always ask to use land, even though you technically had the right to hunt unposted land without asking permission. This tension between different stances may help explain why the averages of the Greens and the Sceptics on the question relating to posting (open acc) were practically identical.

Fishing and trapping were uses of land that raised practically no controversy in the interviews. Compared to hunting, they were mentioned by fewer people as activities they enjoy. Only one person in the sample was a trapper, and I sought him out specifically because of his participation in that activity. I suspect that the lack of mention should be interpreted differently for the two issues – fishing is probably less controversial in itself, while trapping is likely to raise some objections but flies below the radar enough that few people thought to mention it. These interpretations would need to be probed further to be verified.

Hunting, fishing and trapping all have a recreational component to them, judging by the pleasure described by participants who engage in these practices, but they also play a role in subsistence for some. Hall, for example, describes not just the economics but also the health and environmental benefits of eating wild game. Other practices are more unambiguously about pure enjoyment of being on the land or travelling through the landscape. These recreational practices

\(^{80}\) Vermont law requires that, each year, landowners put signs up every 400 feet around the perimeter of the property and register the land as posted with the town clerk. If these requirements are not fulfilled, hunters legally have the right to access the land.

\(^{81}\) In the case of trapping I suspect that it’s flying below the radar of most participants rather than it being uncontroversial.
display a decided split according to whether they involve motors or not. Of the 13 people who mentioned non-motorized recreation, particularly skiing, as a practice they enjoy, only one was in the Government Sceptic group. Conversely three of the four who specifically mentioned motorized recreation were Government Sceptics and the fourth (Laraway) falls somewhat between the groups. These figures suggest that motorized recreation is a component of the Local cultural complex while non-motorized recreation fits more with the Outlander complex. This is evidence backing up what is a widespread perception of who participates in these practices. It is interesting that these recreation splits follow the factor divisions to a much greater degree than splits over hunting do.

There is some danger in overstating the divisions over motorized recreation. First, it is important to distinguish between different types. The most important distinction to arise was between snowmobiling and ATV-riding. Very few people objected to snowmobiles, even in the Green Governance factor group. By contrast there was widespread concern about ATV riding, including many people in the Government Sceptic group. A commonly stated reason for the different stance was that snowmobiles have little impact on the land because the soil is frozen and protected by a layer of snow during the snowmobiling season; ATVs by contrast are seen by many to have significant impacts on the land, primarily by causing erosion on trails. Flannery, who says he’s neutral about ATVs, describes the conflict he sees:

   You talk to these people who own forestland and they’re pissed as hell because these 4 wheelers go in and rip up the road or make a little divot, and all of a sudden all the rain washes down it and washes the whole road out. That’s a big problem.

   Is it a lot of illegal use?

   Oh, it’s all illegal. These people never ask. They see a log road up in Belvidere, they’ll go up on a Saturday morning and go up and down the log road and then go home, you know.

This quote reminds us that there are significant divisions within the Local cultural complex, to which Flannery belongs in many respects. It’s hard to know if by “these people” he is talking about a small group of renegades if he thinks this is common behaviour among ATV riders in general, but there is no doubt of his disapproval of the behaviour.

The ATV community is working hard to change the perception of ATV riders as selfish and lawless, riding on other people’s land without getting permission. They hope to repeat the success of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, the snowmobiling organization that has
fostered good relationships between landowners and snowmobilers in large part by encouraging
the latter to respect landowners and ride only on official trails.

Motorized recreation doesn’t have the advantage that hunting does of being permitted unless the
landowner goes to the trouble to post. Riders need to get explicit permission to use land.
Jackson says that people are much more protective of land these days than they used to be and
that in the early days of snowmobiling, asking permission wasn’t the order of the day. ATV
riding has the misfortune of coming on the scene late.

ATVs do have some support among people who don’t use them. The Goodmans demonstrate
that the issue isn’t simply black and white. They allow their neighbours to ride ATVs on their
land. At the same time, Norton Goodman is very aware of the impacts of mechanized equipment,
whether logging equipment or recreational vehicles, on forest land. The trails through their
woods are well-maintained and show no signs of erosion. Their approach speaks to the fact that
landowners often make judgments on a case-by-case basis, so that the specific relationship
between landowners and aspiring land-users becomes a key factor.

Another gray area is the distinction people make between ATVs as a work vehicle and as a
recreational vehicle. Alvin Moore uses them strictly for forest work and he says that they have
revolutionized the work, a term he uses advisedly. They have replaced both tractors and
snowmobiles (fitted with tracks they can actually go where snowmobiles can’t). Bowen makes
the same distinction and while he sees a place for them as a work vehicle, he says their use as a
recreational vehicle goes against his values because their impacts outweigh what you might get
out of them recreationally.

One of the big issues is how much to accommodate motorized use on public lands. This is where
some people who are otherwise neutral begin to object to motorized use, largely because they see
it as incompatible with non-motorized uses. A contentious issue in Lamoille county has been a
trail that is being established out of a disused railway, with bikers and skiers raising concerns
about sharing the trail with ATVs and snowmobiles. Catherine Goodman, whose land is open to
snowmobiles, nevertheless foresees problems with multi-use trails and worries about the dangers
they pose for skiers.
Warren Cartwright acknowledges that the rail trail might be too narrow to accommodate the whole range of uses, but he is passionate about the need for the state of Vermont to open more land to responsible ATV use. From his experience on his own land and in other states and provinces, he’s convinced that ATV use can have negligible impact on the land provided that users exercise stewardship. He regards it as unfair to allow some uses, like mountain bikes, but not others. This is a sentiment that a number of other Sceptics shared, based on the argument that all taxpayers should have the right to pursue the recreation they choose on public land (though not necessarily everywhere on the land).

A striking contrast is the stance that Daniels adopts, by far the most hostile to motorized recreation, and all the more surprising for coming from a Government Sceptic. His biggest issue is that they are intrusive and noisy: “I don’t understand why they have a right to make noise where I can hear them. I mean I would never think of going to their house and running a chainsaw all day long outside their house. And I don’t know why I have to listen to snowmobiles.” This raises interesting issues around property rights. Daniels sees his right to enjoy his own property as being diminished by the actions of others on adjoining property. This clash of property rights shows that the invocation of the rights of the landowner can be difficult to sort out.

Some might dismiss Daniels’ complaint as aesthetically based, but this misses the point that property rights, based on the theory of nuisance and the enjoyment of one’s property, cannot be separated from aesthetics (Freyfogle, 2007). Similarly the rights that are under dispute – snowmobiling – are themselves recreational and are presumably pursued for purposes of enjoyment, even though snowmobiling is never discussed as an aesthetic practice. This conflict points to different public goods that individuals on either side of the conflict balance in different ways. It is to that act of balancing that I turn in the discussion of governance.

6.5 Governance

In this final section, I am taking a step back to look at governance of land use across the various issues that this chapter has surveyed to this point. There are many synergies among these issues, with threads appearing in multiple contexts but with some shifts in orientation. This section
addresses some of the abstract principles that can be seen operating in the context of the various issues discussed above. The defence of property rights is one such principle; further investigation shows that it opens onto an array of other issues, collected under the general category of public goods. This section examines a number of key public goods and then looks at how those are balanced in the system of governance that operates in Vermont and at the alternatives formulated by interview participants.

One of the threads that ties many of the land use issues together is the concept of property, and specifically the defence of private property rights. Government sceptics are almost by definition advocates of robust private property rights; one of the primary complaints about big government is that it infringes on the private sphere in a way that the speaker feels is inappropriate. Property is a notoriously slippery concept (MacPherson, 1978; Verdery and Humphrey, 2004). One of the biggest issues is that common sense notions of property differ significantly from legal or academic definitions. In particular, a popular conception of property frequently treats it as absolute, meaning that whoever has title to a piece of land (which we should remember is only one kind of property) has authority over every aspect of it (Freyfogle, 2007). A moment’s reflection should convince us that this is not the case in our society today – there are many aspects of land use that the public retains authority over, most obviously around pollution and environmental degradation. Some might argue that that should not be the case, but in my interviews I found that even staunch defenders of private property rights were relatively quick to admit that in some areas the public good trumps the rights of the individual.

One of the key ways of conceiving of the limits on private property is by setting the rights of one property owner against those of another. As Flannery put it – “I’m a firm believer that each person should be able to do whatever they want, when they want to, but obviously no one person or group can infringe on anybody else either.” The rights of a landowner to pursue an activity become problematic when that activity has negative impacts on adjacent landowners’ ability to pursue activities of their choice on their own land. Using the example of genetically modified crops, which was the context of Flannery’s comment, if a farmer plants a GM crop and its pollen contaminates a neighbouring farmer’s crops, making it so she can’t sell them as organic and thereby reducing the value, then the first farmer’s right should be restricted.
The GMO example is instructive because GMO supporters across the state argued that the issue didn’t need to be treated in such an abstract, legal manner. They agreed that it was possible for a situation of the type described above to arise, but they felt that there were many ways for farmers to accommodate each other that didn’t require the withdrawal of the right to use GM crops. “Coexistence” was possible if farmers voluntarily refrained from planting crops in locations where they would be an obvious threat to their neighbours.82

The aspect of the genetically modified crops that causes problems is their mobility, the fact that they don’t respect the lines drawn on a cadastral map. In the case of GM crops it means that pollen can be carried by the wind or by pollinators from one field to another, or the seeds or plant itself may reproduce and spread onto other people’s property. This mobile quality is not limited to GMOs. A much longer standing recognition of limits on private property rights stems from the mobile quality of water (Hackett, 2006). Septic systems or other waste concentrations leach into the water which carries the pollutants to locations beyond the boundaries of the waste producer. This process is well recognized and was mentioned in many different interviews. No one opposed the idea of septic regulation, which in essence removes the right to use your land as a cess pool in whatever way you see fit. For people like Kingsbury, who loads very highly on the Government Sceptic factor, septic regulations were an example of good government, of the state taking appropriate measures to curtail actions that are clearly detrimental to the public good. Even Barnard, who objects to the way the regulations are administered and the fact that they have changed frequently, doesn’t fundamentally disagree with the idea of regulating septic systems (though he does wonder why they have to be revised so frequently).

What makes property rights complicated is the fact that there isn’t widespread agreement on what constitutes public goods, and specifically when a benefit that people enjoy rises to the level of a public good such that state action becomes appropriate. The linked issues of working landscape conservation and the control of development are such a topic of controversy because many people are undecided about what constitutes a public good and how different public goods should be prioritized. There are several public goods identified in this area, but many of them are not recognized by some of the parties to the conflict, and even where they are recognized,

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82 See the pamphlet “Genetic Engineering Co-existence” n.d. [2004], Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.
their level of importance can vary widely. I’ll next consider some of the key candidates for public goods that came up in the interviews.

The integrity of the environment is one of the public goods that has been at the heart of many efforts to restrict landowners’ ability to do whatever they like on their property. Septic regulation is an example of such an effort. What is tricky, however, is that “the environment” is such a broad, abstract category that people’s support for septic regulation may stem from very different visions of what aspects of the environment warrant protection. Water pollution is a concern for many people because it makes lakes and rivers dangerous for humans to swim in; they may be completely unaware of or unconcerned about the effects that the pollution has on non-human life. Anglers may be upset about the effects on a very small selection of species, those which they hope to catch (or which sustain those they hope to catch). Anthropocentric perspectives such as these themselves have gradations (Norton, 2003). Someone who enjoys seeing wildlife such as deer or loons can be interpreted as motivated by an anthropocentric attachment to the environment, particularly when they support management efforts to sustain the species they like to see. This has led to conflict over what version of the environment people want to see protected. Deep divisions between hunters and “environmentalists” stem from different prioritizations of species within the vague rubric of the environment.

The integrity of the environment is often hard to detach from the appearance of the landscape. Large paved areas or sprawling suburbs are taken as indicators of heavy environmental impacts. The fact that environmental impacts often coincide with aesthetic impacts is fortuitous for those most concerned about the visual landscape. The status of aesthetics as a common good is deeply contested in Vermont. Many of the denigrating remarks about zoning focused on bylaws that sought to protect aesthetic concerns, such as restricting the colours of house paint. So to the extent that aesthetic concerns can be framed as environmental concerns, they are likely to have more force. However, many Government Sceptics suspect that aesthetics is the real motivation behind purported environmental efforts and are therefore suspicious about the environmental justifications put forward. This is not to say that Government Sceptics don’t value the landscape for aesthetic reasons; many of them do, but they view those as private preferences that aren’t the appropriate domain for public action.
Recent discourse invokes the term “traditional settlement patterns” – where the focus is on villages of tightly clustered houses surrounded by working farms and forestlands. This terminology highlights the notion of tradition which is a public good in its own right for many. In fact, as a public good, tradition pulls many Government Sceptics toward the Green Governance camp. Complaints from the Government Sceptics often revolved around changes in rural society and livelihoods, largely laying the blame with newcomers. As attached as some were to the look of the landscape, even more important was the deep significance that they attributed to it through the narration of their personal and family histories. Perhaps more than anything else it was tradition as a common good that competed against absolute private property rights in the minds of Sceptics. This will be apparent in the portrait of Arsenault in the next chapter.

One of the aspects of tradition that holds the most sway is the notion of traditional livelihoods and employment sectors. The attachment to the agriculture and forest products industries is deep, and many Government Sceptics are prepared to accept government action to sustain them. This is clearly evident in the similar positive responses of the two factors to the question on government support of these industries (supp WL: “The government should support the agriculture and forest products industries to ensure they survive in the globally competitive market”). This can only partly be explained with the argument that these sectors supply good jobs in comparison to the expanding service and retail sectors; the wages, particularly in agriculture, may not be a point in their favour. But the work is an important source of identity for many of the people in these sectors and they feel that to have these industries disappear would be a major loss to the state as a whole.

“Good jobs” are about more than wages. Tradition is an important aspect to them, but another aspect to consider is autonomy. The opportunity that the agriculture and forest products sectors provide for people to strike off on their own and set up a small business is a highly prized value. Many of the interview participants headed up their own small businesses and were clearly proud of the independence that betokened. The Tremblays in particular were prime examples of lifelong entrepreneurs, always looking for a good business opportunity and usually finding them in

83 see for example the website of Smart Growth Vermont [http://www.smartgrowthvermont.org/learn/patterns/]
the wood products sector (but sometimes in much more surprising places). Dennis Tremblay recounted his experiences in this business landscape with obvious relish. Part of the appeal for people like Dennis seems to be the risk and, by the same token, the opportunity to prove yourself as a shrewd businessperson. The trend towards consolidation into larger and larger companies, with the attendant forcing out of the little guy is an unwelcome development for many.

However, the same taste for risk probably plays a role in the acceptance of such consolidation. It’s seen as the inevitable by-product of the competitive market; the pay-off for the risk you take is that your company succeeds and grows, displacing others. A number of Government Sceptics objected to the “artificial” insulation of farmers from the realities of the marketplace, saying that they don’t have to pay for their mistakes. Even Moore, who loads highly on the Green Governance factor, made the comment that he doesn’t think businesses are entitled to succeed when he answered the survey question about competition. Still, it’s one thing to value a competition between a limited number of enterprises operating in the same region and another to value it at a much bigger scale. The room to participate for people in a small, arguably marginal state like Vermont quickly vanishes when the big players get involved (a struggle that is very current in the organic milk industry, as discussed by the Collinses).

Of course the most salient aspect of autonomy as a public good affecting land use is probably not autonomy in the employment sector, but autonomy as a land owner. This is the public good that is at the heart of the property rights defence, one which is seen to take precedence over many other acknowledged goods. In several situations, Sceptics admitted that they were torn because they valued the working landscape but efforts to conserve it betrayed what for them was the fundamental principle of a landowner’s autonomy, the right to do what you want with your land. After he described the ongoing encroachment of Burlington on the towns around it, I asked Cartwright if there was any point in trying to – (he finished my question for me:) “Save it? But then what are you doing? You’re infringing on someone else’s rights.” And Metcalfe is more explicit about the dangers. When he described the loss of the working landscape as unfortunately the way things are evolving, I asked him if that means you just accept it and move on. He responded, “That’s pretty much the only thing that you can do, unless you put those laws into effect that dictate what somebody can do or can’t do. Then we lose why everybody wants to be an American or whatever.” He said this with a bit of a chuckle, perhaps feeling that it sounds
a bit grand, but I don’t doubt that this is a genuine political value that he holds. Even Marilyn Collins, who loads strongly on the Green Governance factor, voices a similar sentiment – individual autonomy being what drew newcomers to America in the first place. In Marilyn’s case, though, she is quick to put some limits on it. It’s “okay up to a certain point, then you have to start thinking about your ecosystem and your environment.”

An overlooked aspect of autonomy is its contribution to identity. Jeremiah Morton paints a picture of having his neighbours on the planning board look over his plans and pass judgment on them; his response gave the impression that he was insulted at being subjected to such oversight. This makes sense when you consider the amount of pride that people who work the land take in what they do. The suggestion that oversight is necessary impugns either the integrity of the land workers, or their ability and knowledge about best practices. In either case some sense of outrage can hardly be surprising.

These issues of integrity and autonomy help to make sense of the predominant response I encountered among Government Sceptics to “bad apples” – i.e., the few people in any group who flout the rules and raise the ire of the broader population. The typical response was to brush off the impacts of these bad apples as relatively insignificant, certainly not calling for the roll-out of an extensive regulatory program to ensure that everyone is in compliance. From the perspective of the Sceptics, medicine of that sort is worse than the disease. They would prefer to tolerate a little pollution or a little noise or a little personal danger than live in a state where everyone is constantly checked on to verify that they aren’t committing an offense. This has interesting parallels with civil liberties arguments that defend against unreasonable searches, even when they manage to catch an infraction. The libertarian thread of the Government Sceptic position doesn’t position it at the political fringe. It connects with deeply held political values that appear across the political spectrum.

The scenario raised by the bad apples nicely illustrates the way that different actors work to balance the various common goods that I’ve outlined above. It’s a frequently overlooked point that the Government Sceptics aren’t denying the common good. The common good that they put

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84 The actual number of bad apples is of course important – describing them as “few” or a “handful” is part of the response that I’m analyzing here.
the most emphasis on is freedom of action and the society that emerges from a concerted protection of that good (c.f. Booth, 1994). All the Sceptics that I talked to recognize other common goods, such as the environment or the health and safety of the population, but these are weighed against the impacts that efforts to protect them would have on autonomy.

Where freedom of action has led in the past and where it leads today may be quite different things. Neoliberalism capitalizes on freedom of action as nothing has in the past, giving global corporations the opportunity to operate on a much vaster scale than ever before. This is troubling to some of the people whose first impulse is to defend it. Kingsbury’s strong defence of private property rights might suggest that he would align with neoliberal perspectives generally, but he voices sharp criticisms of corporations and the environmental impacts of their operations at various points in his interview.

Similarly, many of the participants showed ambivalence about the effects of the competitive market – the heart of neoliberal doctrine. The survey statement compete elicited a lukewarm response at best from the Sceptics (“The reality of the global economy is that businesses that can’t compete will go under, and in the end we’re better off if we let that process run its course”). Zeroes, ones and minus ones predominate, accounting for two-thirds of the responses; no one goes above a +2. Metcalfe gives a resounding -4 to the statement. Arsenault, in his interview, illustrates the ambivalence around competition. He generally defends small farms and the way of life they represent, but by the end he recognizes the contradiction that defence raises with his commitment to a laissez-faire model of government. If the small farms aren’t economically viable, “do I want to see them sitting idle or do I want to see responsible development on it?” He poses it as a rhetorical question, presuming a choice for the latter, but he can’t bring himself to go for that choice. The most he can say is, “I don’t know.” He’s clearly conflicted. Judging by the survey responses to compete, his conflict is repeated in many more hearts across the state.

The vision of society embraced by most of the Government Sceptics is based on the upstanding individual, who recognizes his or her responsibilities toward other members of the community and voluntarily fulfills them. The emphasis on the voluntary was ubiquitous; in most specific cases Sceptics sought very similar goals to what the Greens sought, but they were unwilling to support initiatives that had a compulsory character. Instead they advocated for incentives or
education. Sometimes they described methods of social control such as internal policing – Jackson describes following young ATV riders as they drove their vehicles illegally to the local high school, where he parked and let them know he was watching them. Carleton feels that our society has lost the art of face to face interaction and people shy away from confronting others when they see them acting irresponsibly.

Both groups frequently invoke education as a solution to irresponsible behaviour. The specific content of the education is bound to raise problems. Metcalfe, for instance, believes that people need to be educated not to think of the land as purely a source of profit. At the same time he objects to the variant of environmentalism that his children are being taught in school, which he says turns them against hunting and logging. These views aren’t inconsistent, but they do raise the point in a single interview that “education” is an empty category whose content is supplied by whoever does the educating. The education that Margaret Price advocates as a way to instil a land ethic is probably very similar to what Metcalfe objects to. Education can’t be a solution until there is some agreement on what positions need to be instilled.

The challenge this emphasis on voluntary action and education faces is what to do when someone decides not to follow the propounded norms. In a number of cases people who prefer voluntary approaches concede that some sort of regulation is appropriate as a back-up. Metcalfe raised the issue of countries that were able to cut virgin forests with no regulations. When I asked whether we should drop our regulations or they should enact regulations, he responded “I think they should have the rules should apply to them more so than ours being backed off. Everybody’s semi-accepted what we have to work with here, so why soften up on the rules?” Yet it is clear from his interview that he sees the regulations operating as a sort of baseline to counter the worst sorts of abuses, rather than as a constant form of government oversight.

In considering the objections to the public oversight of land uses, it is worthwhile distinguishing stances that focus on the specifics of implementation rather than the overall principle. Many of the interviews mentioned problems with government bureaucracies that weren’t sufficiently in touch with the land use issues on the ground. The frustration with bureaucracies was not limited to Government Sceptics; people with strong commitments to the environment and conservation also complained about the poor design of many policy measures. Edward Collins described the
perversity of a pollution abatement program for farms that gives assistance to the worst polluters, recounting a story of a farmer who intentionally allowed manure to get into the river so that he could access funds for a new manure management system. Other participants describe cases of corruption or special privileges enjoyed by powerful interests; again these stories were just as likely to come from either factor group. The special interests identified did differ somewhat. The Government Sceptics were more likely to describe environmentalists in that position. Corporate interests were identified by more people in the Green Governance factor, but there were some in the Government Sceptic factor who pointed their fingers in this direction as well. Interestingly, issues of local control came up less than I expected. If people objected to the idea of government oversight, they didn’t seem to be much reassured by having a municipal body reviewing their plans instead of a state body.

One complaint that arose in this context was that the intensity of oversight was too great. Daniels describes the process of getting permits to spray herbicides in aquatic environments. He feels that having a license should be enough and that the costs and burdens involved with getting a permit for each application have the effect of pushing people to just do it themselves rather than hiring a licensed contractor; the result is more pollution rather than less. This ties in to a larger argument that as requirements get too onerous they can become counterproductive as people seek to avoid them altogether.

Another complaint that the Sceptics voiced about the regulatory system is that the hearing process around land use gives too many opportunities for neighbours to protest a new use. This sentiment is captured in the question *hold up*: “Vermont law makes it too easy for one person to hold up development projects by appealing permits.” All but one who loaded on the factor gave a 3 or a 4 (and Elaine Tremblay gave it a 2). The Green Governance factor group’s average response was positive on this question showing that there is some acceptance that this is a problem. These responses reflect the dilemma of NIMBYism (“Not In My Back Yard”), which has been an issue for progressives that advocate strong planning as well as for people with more of a libertarian streak (Harvey, 1996; Andrew Broderick, Housing Vermont, Interview 2008).85

85 This issue came up in debates over the Vermont Neighborhoods initiative of the Vermont Legislature in 2008 as well. In an effort to address it, the legislation allows the town to make some uses presumptive in a designated area, meaning that they are shielded from challenge by putting the onus on the opponents to prove that the usage
Neighbours often prefer to have open fields rather than other houses adjoining their property and will use whatever advantage the system offers them to keep development out. Emily Marks described the same dynamic as residents successfully kept a transitional housing program out of their neighbourhood because, as Marks reports the sentiment, “‘we don’t want those people living in our community.’” People on both sides of the factor division question whether the public good is served by such a system.

The hearing process is one contributing factor to what many see as the onerous character of the regulatory system. Government Sceptics are quick to point out the effects of the burdens the system creates. I have already discussed Sceptics’ arguments about the impacts on the price of housing. Another effect that they point out is the overall chill it creates in the business climate of the state. Carleton states this most forcefully; on several occasions in the interview he connects onerous regulations to an inability for local firms to compete. “We spend so much time with goddamn regulations that we can’t do any work, and the value of your product, the cost of your product, becomes inflated by the cost of compliance.” At another point he makes it clear that he sees a lot of the requirements as common sense, things that should be done anyway, but demonstrating compliance to regulations takes more effort than doing the work itself.

Other participants echo some of Carleton’s points. After Barnard discussed the costs involved with permitting, I asked if he would support regulation that didn’t force up the costs. Before I could finish the question, he responded that there was no such thing. “Anytime you put a restriction on it someone’s got to find a way to either get around it or deal with it” – the clear implication being “dealing with it” costs money. Barnard doesn’t leave it at that, however. He softens his critique considerably by saying, “They’re on the right track, I mean you’ve got to have some regulations. You can’t just let people just make a mess. I’m for zoning to a point.” But the problem that he doesn’t know how to resolve is that strict regulations are just circumvented by the bad apples while the honest person gets screwed, to put it colloquially.

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doesn’t fit. Erhardt Mahnke, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition, personal communication, Nov 2007. See also George Malek at the House General committee hearings March 28, 2008. Act 176 (2008) changed Chapter 117 Sec. 9. 24 V.S.A. § 4471(e) of the Vermont Statutes to make conditional use permits in a “Vermont Neighborhood” free from the possibility of appeal if they are determined not to cause undue adverse impact.
Barnard’s point that the impacts of regulations are distributed unevenly also feeds into an argument that Daniels makes about the need to foster good jobs to keep young people in the state. He sees this objective to be threatened by the regulatory environment: “Well, there needs to be control, but it’s time consuming and expensive. Do we want Vermont to be a national park? Maybe, but we need young people, jobs and so we need businesses. And it isn’t happening. People look at this onerous process and decide to locate in New Jersey.” He goes on to say that a viable economy has to be built on more than just service jobs. But the permitting process discourages companies from moving in. Again, he is quick to soften his position. “I don’t think we want to have people build an oil refinery without permits. There has to be a compromise. We want to keep Vermont green but we also want to have people come and live here. Real people, not just rich people.” Again, the hostility to the current regulatory environment can’t be read as being anti-environmental or unconcerned about growth.

Vermont’s regulatory environment is the chief target of the Government Sceptics. The most highly ranked statement for their factor group was unfbr biz – “One of the main economic issues facing Vermont is its unfriendly business climate, in particular, the cost and effort needed to satisfy state regulations.” Unsurprisingly, this statement also had the lowest standard deviation. The Greens by contrast were on average neutral, but displayed the highest standard deviation of any statement in the survey. Amanda Chisholm gives a good picture of the ambivalence. On one hand she admits to being frustrated with the NIMBYism she sometimes sees in Vermont, but then she says “People say they make you jump through hoops – I think that’s a good thing, slowing down your thought process. […] I think sometimes it’s good for developers to have to think about what they are going to do, for towns to have to think about it.”

The actual effects of the regulatory environment in Vermont are a subject of considerable debate. One set of examples represents evidence for anti-regulation perspectives while another set makes the case that regulation is a necessity that works far more than it fails. These differences in interpretation are examples of different causal models, and they demonstrate how important an understanding of causal models is to any effort to comprehend these types of political disagreements. It is easy to see how a model that emphasizes the perverse effects of regulation – bad apples circumventing the system and honest citizens bearing the burden – leads to political stances opposing regulation. The power of the causal models is patent; what is more difficult to
discern is how the models are spread and adopted. To answer that question requires further investigation into the construction of credibility within cultural complexes. Such an investigation is a daunting undertaking that I have only laid out in this dissertation, but which certainly warrants further effort.

This section and the preceding sections make apparent that Government Sceptics have serious concerns about the effects of the current governance system on key public goods: the business climate and individual autonomy. To some extent, these misgivings are shared by the Greens as well. However, their emphasis on these public goods doesn’t prevent Sceptics from also recognizing the importance of public goods that the Greens put a higher priority on, such as environmental health and traditional landscapes (or livelihoods, as Sceptics would emphasize). While they recognize these latter public goods as important, what distinguishes the Sceptics from the Greens is the way that they prioritize the goods. I believe that the role that this differential prioritization plays is significant. I am proposing a model of political and social relations that relies on differential prioritization rather than polarization. This model posits that the two groups in conflict are not diametrically opposed to one another in their values or political stances. Instead the conflict comes from each group putting different values at the top of the list. This is still a significant source of difference, and I’m not arguing that it can just be brushed away. However, it is a different sort of conflict than one where neither side recognizes the values of the other side as valid.

At the same time that we recognize that there is some common ground among the values and public goods recognized by both sides of the conflict, we have to account for the intensity that often arises. This is where the question of cultural complexes comes back into play. Political divisions that may not be unbridgeable are often overlaid with other divisions that widen the chasm between the groups. We have to recognize the impact of these cultural factors. Imagining that the conflict is just about land use issues misses the mark. The issues themselves are not enough to explain the extent of acrimony that is often visible in the public sphere.
Chapter 7: Negotiations

In this chapter I provide three vignettes of different participants in my research. My point in presenting these vignettes is to show in more detail than the previous chapter the range of considerations that participants weigh when they are faced with conflicting norms. Two of the three participants that I present here are fairly representative of the factor groups, in the sense that they have high loadings on the respective factors. The third loads moderately on the Government Sceptic factor, though in his case there are signs that he is beyond the Sceptics in many of his views. In each case, despite an overall perspective in line with the factor, there are many points where the stances of the participants remains unsettled. They raise issues that cause them to back away from categorical statements; they display sympathy for people who are disadvantaged by policies they advocate; they simply admit to not knowing what the best way to handle the situation is. I make the point of presenting these interviews in sufficient detail for these uncertainties and tensions to appear because I think that when they drop out of the picture the image that is conveyed feeds into the narrative of political polarization, which can easily become self-fulfilling. I specifically chose people who load strongly on each factor group to avoid the criticism that these are the people on the margins of the group, or that they are uncommitted. I contend that much of the political support for each of the sides of the fights over land use governance harbours significant doubts about what steps are appropriate to take on these issues. If that is indeed the case, then I believe forums that made space for civil discussion and empathetic listening could make real progress at reducing the acrimony and polarization that land use issues have generated in the past.

The close attention to the way participants think through land use dilemmas give us a picture of what Collier and Ong (2005) call reflexive practices, where people bring their critical powers to bear on the institutions and practices they engage in to reflect on what is appropriate. The fact that these reflexive practices are ongoing and not just provoked by the interview situation is apparent as soon as participants begin to discuss the topics; they have clearly thought through many of these issues already, whether alone or in discussion with others. The interviews allow
us to gain some insight into how the participant works through a problematic situation to arrive at a normative stance. If we only focus on the outcome of that reflexive process we lose a sense of the alternatives that were explored and the factors that were decisive in the participant’s choice of the final stance over the alternatives under the given circumstances. We allow the submerged threads to be obscured by the dominant one. Without that information we have no idea how a change in circumstances might change the participant’s stance.

To allow a person’s politics to be represented by a single unequivocal stance is to turn our backs on numerous possibilities of engagement. In the course of thinking through a set of circumstances and exploring alternatives, participants show potential openings, places where their dominant stance is not entirely satisfactory. If we have adopted a stance in tension with theirs, these openings represent areas where we might have common concerns, a potentially fruitful place to begin a conversation or take small, confidence-building actions.

I don’t want to exaggerate these openings. After all they do represent alternatives that were ultimately dropped. Likewise, the area of commonality may be quite small relative to the areas of tension. I don’t expect that these openings are going to magically make everyone agree. But what I think they can do is pull us away from our certainties, our belief that we know who the other side is and what they think. If we really try to follow their logic we may find that our seemingly dramatic differences are the product of different interpretations of evidence rather than different fundamental values, for example. Conflicts over interpretation may still be significant obstacles to finding common stances, but they call for different approaches than ones we would use to address values conflicts.

I want to be clear that when someone qualifies a stance that they initially expressed more forcefully, I am not interpreting that as an indication that they don’t really believe the original stance. I think the advocates of private property rights really are advocates of private property rights. I’m not trying to argue that underneath they all recognize that government oversight is the way to go. What I’m saying is that we need to pay attention to the qualifications that people make because they point to places where the discourses are unsettled, places where people acknowledge difficulties that arise from their stances. People come up with the best solutions they can to a given set of circumstances. The fact that they advocate for one solution doesn’t
necessarily mean that that is the only option that they will consider. Rather, from the solutions on offer, they judge it to meet what they see as the most important needs.

I’m aware of my frequent use of the word “we” in the opening to this chapter. And the “we” that I invoke also has some implicit objectives – finding some sort of negotiated solution to what have been intractable land use conflicts. This may not sit well with people who feel that by negotiating we will be forced to compromise our grounding principles. Let me position myself: I am an advocate of planning and collective defence of the common good. I am a very strong believer in democratic process. Doing this work has made me question some of the commitments I used to think I had. I’m not convinced that the state (as we currently know it) is the best option for overseeing the common good. There are serious issues around democratic process. I wonder whether there might be ways to construct democratic oversight more effectively in a non-state form, or in a devolved form, or in a form of the state that is significantly different than what we know. I am somewhat sympathetic to the idea that we lose something when we turn responsibility over to the state. I am not totally against the responsibilization move of neoliberalism – its idea that individuals should assume more responsibility for their own wellbeing. The neoliberal focus on responsibility overemphasizes the individual however, minimizing the role of strong collective forms of responsibility. Despite a frequent invocation of community, neoliberal discourses devote little thought to how communities are constituted and how they govern themselves in ways that are different both from the state and the individual.

The issue of community is one of the most fraught topics in political philosophy (Amit, 2002; Cohen, 1985; Kemmis, 1990; Creed, 2006). Some see it as a regressive step, returning us to a times of unquestioned hierarchies and thinly veiled domination (Booth, 1994). Others see it as a democratic alternative charting a path between an overweening state and a heartless market (Kemmis, 1990). I think it has the potential to be both, and only constant vigilance and holding to account can hope to keep community from sliding from the latter into the former vision.

I find it disconcerting that the areas where the current system is failing often lend themselves to neoliberal solutions (for instance to methods of organizing voluntary action, or methods of
developing stewardship as a character trait). Maybe an important point to bring away from this is that there is a widely shared perspective that it is a good thing when much of the responsibility for the land is borne by individuals and groups outside the state. Perhaps this scepticism toward the state doesn’t have to be hostility, but rather a recognition that while the state has been the main guarantor for public goods for some time, there may be other ways of pursuing those ends that are worth exploring. Can we ensure the common good in non-governmental ways? And can we do that in non-neoliberal ways?

These are questions I cannot answer here, but they have been raised by my engagement with the people who participated in my research. In the next section of this chapter, I relate similar questions and struggles that three participants expressed in the course of their interviews. I then think through how the stances they express can be seen to connect, or not, to larger political projects such as neoliberalism. This leads to a comparison with other participants, some of whom display a stronger connection, or enrolment, to a given political project. The chapter ends with a consideration of what is gained in descriptions of popular support for political projects by devoting more attention to the details of enrolment.

7.1 Vignettes

7.1.1 Larry Kingsbury

Larry Kingsbury is an illuminating figure to examine because his survey responses cast him as one of the strongest Government Sceptics of all the participants (with a loading of 0.775). To the extent that we interpret this factor as representing hostility to government oversight of land use, we might expect Kingsbury to express particularly hard-line stances in his interview. However, that is not the case. Throughout the interview, Kingsbury stresses the importance of balance in policy-making. Admittedly, what one person sees as balanced can appear as heavily biased to another, but in general Kingsbury backs up his embrace of balance with a considered, open attitude toward the issues on the table.

Having said that, let me begin by outlining Kingsbury’s most uncompromising stance – his tenacious defence of the interests of land investors. Kingsbury displays his greatest expression of outrage when he describes the effect of endangered species legislation on people’s life plans:
But, I don’t know, to me I just can’t fathom the absurdity of maybe somebody owns 1000 acres of land out west that they bought for a retirement thing, maybe they bought it when they were 30 years old to sell off for a retirement nest egg, and two years or five years before their retirement time came somebody found one example of one endangered species something or other on that land, and the government just instantly froze the thing completely out of the commerce market. Now, this kind of insanity needs to be addressed.

The example he chooses is interesting because it sympathises with someone whose activity can only be described as speculation in land. The location of the land on the other side of the continent, the large size of the parcel and the intention from the beginning to use the land as a source of revenue for retirement – all of these could incline someone to be less sympathetic to the seller. It would be more effective rhetorically to paint a picture of someone slicing off a parcel of their family homestead to make ends meet. The fact that Kingsbury doesn’t do so shows that he sees investment in land development as an entirely honourable way to generate income.

Kingsbury’s broader perspective on development is somewhat more complicated. He is less concerned about the impact of development on Vermont than most of the participants, largely because he doesn’t believe Vermont faces the kinds of development pressures other places do. In part, this seems to be because he distinguishes between residential development and commercial/industrial development. The development in Vermont is more residential and, unlike a lot of locals, Kingsbury actually welcomes the newcomers and the fact that the IT revolution allows them to move in while leaving “the development back at the other end of the modem.” When the focus shifts to industrial and commercial development, though, Kingsbury’s tone shifts as well. Since the 1950s he has witnessed the intensity of development in southern Appalachian states and speaks of the changes with real dismay, contrasting the two-lane roads and the market farms of the past with the paved-over commercial strips and massive industrial plants of the present day.

Kingsbury implies that one can make distinctions about what kinds of industry are beneficial or detrimental to a community. He is a loyal supporter of local forestry and gravel-quarrying operations. Upon coming across the statement towards the end of the survey identifying the unfriendly business climate as a key economic issue, he remarked “That’s a beauty. Bingo! The first one for ‘very strongly’ [+4].” However, in addition to his dismay at the development in
Appalachia, his cynicism about corporate America comes out clearly when he describes “big city corporations com[ing] in there wanting practically to ruin some little town for some huge commercial purpose.” This negative comment, when contrasted with more approving comments on other business activities, suggests that Kingsbury has a normative standard that distinguishes between different types of profit-seeking behaviour. It is interesting that this standard seems to subject corporations to special scrutiny, when they are the heroes of many other pro-business narratives.

This scepticism about the activity of corporations extends to Kingsbury’s perspective on regulation. Where he often defends the activities of homeowners on their property, he implicitly supports the oversight of corporate development of land.

I bought the land, I pay taxes on it – if I felt like encroaching on that wetland 100 feet or something and making my lawn bigger or doing something like that, that’s fine. Now by the same token, if it was some huge important wetland some place and some big corporation decided to come in there and fill the whole damn thing up and establish an industrial complex there, there’s probably better places for them to do that.

This returns us to the issue of balance that I led this discussion off with. Kingsbury does not oppose all regulation. In addition to his apparent support for oversight of corporate activities, he explicitly supports the regulation of septic systems and of logging operations. But Kingsbury believes regulation often crosses the line of “common sense” and starts to concern itself with things that it has no business with.

Determining the appropriate scope of regulation leads to a consideration of what entities are so valuable that impacts on them need to be carefully controlled. Kingsbury’s comments provide a particularly clear view of the relationship between the valuing of different entities and norms of regulation. As is clear from the first quote in this section, Kingsbury places little value on endangered species. He’s more specific when he discusses the justification for wetland regulations saying, “I don’t feel like whether a certain kind of turtle or a certain kind of tree frog or something – that doesn’t have any real basis, not any common sense to it at all.” And in another comment it comes out that people are too concerned about creatures “that you never see anyway.” Taken together these comments suggest that for Kingsbury part of what makes wildlife valuable is the pleasure it brings to humans when they see it, so that uncharismatic species like reptiles and amphibians don’t warrant the kind of concern that more exciting species
do. This perspective has been identified and written about as a strand of anthropocentric relation to the environment (Lindenmayer and Burgman, 2005).

Kingsbury’s concern for the environment extends beyond charismatic species, however. After dismissing concerns about species of turtles and frogs, he goes on to acknowledge other aspects of wetlands that should be protected – erosion control and their “purifying effect.” To the extent that these qualities are valued for the benefits they provide humans, they could also be characterized as anthropocentric values. Nevertheless, Kingsbury’s awareness of them is significant from an environmentalist perspective. While the fact that he hasn’t accepted the importance of biodiversity will give some environmentalists pause, he has accepted the importance of complex environmental processes that depend on functioning ecosystems. If biodiversity can be shown to sustain these processes, then convincing Kingsbury to support it may not be as difficult as some of his statements would suggest.

One of the things that gives Kingsbury’s perspective a feeling of balance is his ungrudging appreciation of the places where regulation works. In this sense, it doesn’t seem that his opposition to specific forms of regulation is ideologically driven. He is unstinting in his criticism of the “thoughtless, wasteful, absurd” practices whose impacts ultimately spawned the environmental movement, particularly the careless treatment of water resources. His unflinching focus on the behaviour of bad apples is unusual among the critics of regulation, who tend to minimize the seriousness of their impacts.

What happens is every time somebody evades a responsibility, you lose a freedom. And the fact that people were not responsible about things, people bought a piece of hillside that was all clay and turned it into a trailer park and it ended up being a ten acre cess pool - this happened, a lot. And okay, that’s the kind of thing that’s put us where we are. As disagreeable as Kingsbury finds regulation, he nevertheless sees that there is a need for it because of the irresponsibility of some in the community. It is interesting that he uses this logic even when talking about manipulation of the bureaucracy (his example is people getting septic permits where others were denied). He focuses his ire and exasperation on the manipulators rather than the bureaucrats saying “the good old boys will find their way around it.”

This last example notwithstanding, Kingsbury has plenty of criticism for the bureaucracy in the interview. This ties in to his larger views on appropriate governance. His main issue with regulation is the rigidity with which it is applied. He feels that government officials follow the
letter of the law rather than considering the severity of the impacts in the case in front of them – “feeling like they have to apply this philosophy right down to worrying about – if the kids threw a child’s cartload of sand into the swamp in back of the house, it was a big problem. That’s the thing I think that makes everybody mad.” In this sort of situation, Kingsbury falls back on the notion of common sense as a guide to what should be allowed and what shouldn’t be.

Common sense is at the heart of Kingsbury’s view of good government, embodied in what he calls “wise old heads.” These are the people who should be entrusted with decision-making authority, for instance in the state legislature or in administrative positions. In keeping with ideas going back to Thomas Jefferson, Kingsbury identifies farmers as the most obvious ones to turn to because they are “entrepreneurs and people who have to live by their wits and live in the real world, not protected by the business acumen of an employer.” The shortage of farmers in the modern world means turning elsewhere as well; Kingsbury highlights as key qualities independent thinking and the ability to look at the “chessboard” and see several moves ahead. This contrasts with the lack of grounding in the real world that characterizes many of the academically trained civil servants, according to Kingsbury. He argues strongly that these officials should pay attention to the people who deal with problems that come up daily in the course of managing farms and roads and woodlots rather than relying on their book learning.

Characteristically, Kingsbury softens this position ultimately when he says “Mister Uneducated Common Sense can’t run it the way it should be, but Mister Educated Fool can’t either. They need to work together, I guess.”

For Kingsbury, land use oversight is justified in cases where key environmental values are threatened by development. But these threats have to be compelling because he sets very high store on the uses of the land represented by development. As noted above, he has no problem with individuals speculating on land to ensure a source of income for the future. Similarly he sees residential development as fulfilling a vital public need, particularly in Vermont where housing is in short supply. As he states, “You certainly ought to have the right to buy a piece of land and build a residence on it and live there if there’s not some compelling reason [not to].”

86 I use this term in its colloquial sense rather than following Gramsci’s (1971) specific usage, where common sense is seen as the sedimentation of past hegemonic stances and therefore demanding confrontation with “good sense.” Colloquially, common sense has resemblances to both Gramsci’s “common sense” and “good sense.”
Following this logic, he opposes zoning that tries to concentrate development by limiting small-lot subdivisions to certain specified areas. “Why do they do these things?” he asks. “Is it aesthetics? Is it somebody’s idea that they want to be able to live in a ten acre area and they are willing to pay the extra money and it should be available?” He views this rationale as based on private preferences and doesn’t feel like it should be the basis for development controls. He has less of a problem if the regulations are already in place when someone buys the land but what he objects to above all is mid-stream changes, when someone buys land for a purpose such as to serve as a retirement fund and then sees that option vanish with new regulations.

Despite the impatience Kingsbury demonstrates in these examples, elsewhere he shows remarkable appreciation for land use controls in situations where he deems them appropriate.

In the big picture certainly rural prospects of a decent place to live in a rural environment are probably a hell of a lot better than they were fifty years ago. You don’t have the freedom to buy some little place and just stick in anything and go with it, but still, the fact that you have to do what you have to do contributes to the common good in the long run.

This invocation of the common good and the acceptance of the restriction on freedom is striking and is another indication that Kingsbury is not motivated by a purely ideological conviction defending private property rights. And indeed by the end of the interview, Kingsbury sounds like he accepts the need for land use planning as he considers the increasing influx of new residents: “we certainly need to have a plan for that and have it so that – things need to be organized and the dos and don’ts need to be pretty well in place before that happens.” How far-reaching these “dos and don’ts” should be isn’t clear from this statement, but Kingsbury sees these measures as a justifiable response to the threat that farmers and loggers might be “squeezed out.” Although he seems to see commercial development as the biggest threat, if residential development shows itself capable of consuming large acreages of the working landscape – which seems increasingly likely – Kingsbury’s assessment of the threat may change. If that happens, he might be willing to support regulations that cover not just septic systems but also development density, assuming these regulations were effective in protecting the working landscape.

Kingsbury’s frequent reference back to an idea of common sense is key. While that idea can be used to shut off discussion and discredit opposing ideas, I find that in Kingsbury’s case common
sense refers not only to a question of what is valuable but also to issues of cause and effect. Common sense is in part about knowing what the results of actions are likely to be. And this emphasis is what makes Kingsbury’s stance open rather than ideological.

To illustrate, let me take one last example from the interview. Kingsbury objects to the heavy regulation of watercourses, in particular the ban on mining “river gravel.” He describes the past practice of digging gravel out of the river bottoms and how the riverbeds would fill right back up with gravel. Then the state prohibited the practice and “as a result, a huge amount of really nice field and land along the [Windy] Road, along the [Shady] River just has been washed away. The river just keeps getting shallower and wider, shallower and wider, and encroaching and encroaching.” He thinks little of the efforts to protect the stream banks by planting trees along it. This is an issue that has been studied extensively by the academics of whom Kingsbury is so sceptical. His lifetime observations and discussions with neighbours who work the land have led him to a model of erosion quite different from what the academics have come up with. It is worth emphasizing that this isn’t a case of knee-jerk rejection; on the issue of wetland ecosystem services Kingsbury appears glad to accept explanations coming from academia. Judging by the general tone of the interview and the specific stances Kingsbury adopted, I suspect that he would be open to a presentation of the causal arguments that explain river dynamics and erosion. It would be work to change his mind, but if environmentalists could marshal convincing evidence, my bet is they could do it. This is the more promising notion of common sense at work – a willingness to critically examine evidence and draw the best conclusions possible.

7.1.2 Ken Lines

If Larry Kingsbury emerges from the survey as one of the best representatives of the group that is deeply suspicious of government, Ken Lines’ survey responses cast him in a similar position with respect to the group advocating environmental protection. He has one of the highest loadings on the Green Governance factor (0.85) in addition to having a notable negative loading on Government Scepticism (-0.31). This combination might lead us to expect Lines to express uncompromising environmental stances in his interview, but as with Kingsbury, he shows himself to be far from doctrinaire in the way he approaches issues of land use governance.
There can be no doubt that Lines is deeply committed to the well-being of the environment. He has studied ecological and environmental issues and worked in that field throughout his adult life. But he admits that his views have evolved significantly from his college years when he was essentially a single issue voter, judging candidates for office by their positions on the environment. His views of the environment have undergone a parallel transformation. When he was younger, his main focus was wilderness preservation. At some point he realized that the relationship between humans and nonhuman nature was an equally important political issue. He developed an appreciation of the working landscape and of ethical traditions in hunting. And he has come to embrace logging to a surprising extent, recognizing that a bad logging operation has some negative impacts but is preferable to development because it helps maintain critical wildlife corridors.

In the interview, Lines’ environmental views are tempered by a deep sensitivity to community dynamics and individual sensibilities. His environmentalism is defined by a particular kind of pragmatism, one that looks at building support for environmental protection through a long term campaign of persuasion and education rather than through strategic political action. He points out that legislation that doesn’t have broad support runs into problems and that it’s better to build that support before trying to enact legislation.

Lines’ efforts to build community support for environmentalism have sharpened his perception of the issues facing the communities where he works. He describes, in sympathetic detail, the challenges that long-time Vermont families face as the value of their property and their tax burden goes up or the economic pressures that may push people to hunt illegally. And he raises these perspectives even as he talks about the concrete impacts on the environment that leads to. He recognizes the nature of the obstacles that confront his efforts.

Lines favours a voluntary approach to conservation. Organizations that he’s involved with look for ways to encourage stewardship in local landowners. He’s painfully aware of the delicacy of that task.

How do you do that tactfully, without affronting their belief systems? To show them another potential avenue of the importance of their land. We’re trying to make it so that it’s going to augment what they already believe in – it’s your land and you get to do with it what you want – but there’s a lot of us and a lot of things that benefit from that land,
and you have a lot of landowners around you that are also a part of that system. So, to try to get people to stop thinking about boundaries, where their property line stops. Lines is clearly working within a property rights model. He’s not challenging people by pushing for a redefinition of their rights as landowners. To avoid provoking them, he affirms their property rights but tries to appeal to a generosity of spirit and an awareness of a larger community, of both humans and non-humans, that are impacted by the decisions the landowner makes.

This approach is not always successful. Lines is aware that owners of large parcels get requests from all sides – from hunters, recreational groups, conservation organizations and more – and that they must be feeling harassed (something that Arsenault confirms pointedly in his interview). But Lines tries to put the emphasis on building respectful relationships rather than achieving a particular conservation objective.

To me, getting on the personal level, it’s respecting people’s land, respecting people’s decisions and how they use that land, and trying to even accept it when you don’t agree with it. That’s always hard – “that guy, he just doesn’t want us to do that.” It’s like okay, he’s got his reasons and you’ve got to just go with it. […] You learn to accept that sort of thing and […] you don’t hold big grudges, at least you try not to, when you see someone doing something and you’re just like “ah, how could they do it that way?” And instead of being angry at the person for doing it, just like - okay, he’s just got a different set of guidelines.

Lines is approaching his work with a very relativist perspective, avoiding being judgmental and recognizing that each person has their own normative perspectives. But it’s clear that it can be a struggle to adopt this perspective. He admits to feeling depressed sometimes when he looks at the state of the habitat for certain populations of wildlife.

Lines has mixed feelings about government involvement in land use oversight. It’s clear that he is very concerned that land use decisions be made with an eye on the range of values different pieces of land provide, giving examples of land that is well suited to forestry use, or good bear habitat, or that is an important wildlife corridor connecting other habitats or serves as a buffer around water bodies. He speaks positively about Act 200, the state-wide planning legislation that spawned a massive local control/property rights backlash, and he clearly believes in the importance of robust municipal planning. But he switches gears in the middle of his discussion of planning, recognizing the importance of the American traditions of independence and
autonomy and raising doubts about whether it’s fair to write laws that create significant financial setbacks for landowners.

Lines’ reservations about heavy-handed government initiatives are a dominant feature of his interview, as is his preference for approaches that use persuasion to encourage stewardship in landowners. But at some level, he is convinced of the importance of government oversight. This comes through most strongly in his survey responses on questions of governance, where his answers are consistently at or beyond the Green Governance average. One of his strongest stances is on the importance of state-level involvement in planning, rather than just leaving decisions to municipal governments. He adamantly opposes the devolution of planning to the local level. He has little sympathy for the argument that state government is too bureaucratic to oversee land use, nor for arguments that Vermont is over-regulated. The picture that emerges from the survey is of a committed advocate for strong governmental oversight of land use.

Lines is navigating between two visions that are difficult to reconcile. On one hand he has clear concerns and objectives relating to habitat protection and environmental conservation generally. These commitments lead to support for unambiguous delineation of landowner responsibilities backed up by regulation. On the other hand, he is aware that the dynamics of communities and the sensibilities of individuals can make heavy-handed approaches counter-productive. He wants to be able to trust his neighbours to be good stewards, and he even tries to accept when they choose not to be, but at some point it seems that his patience wears out and he turns to the state.

Lines’ ambivalence is reflected in his views of community. He values the sense of community that develops in rural Vermont, as a result of the small size of the population and the strength of tradition. But he also despairs at times because the communities can be rigid and unwelcoming of new people and new ideas, and that the rallying cry of many local opposition movements is that some “outside group” is trying to impose its agenda on us. This suspicion of outsiders raises serious tensions for Lines in his relationship-building approach to conservation. He believes that it’s important to approach landowners gradually and gain their trust, but he’s had people claim that this approach masks a hidden agenda, a characteristic that “outside” environmental groups are often saddled with by their opponents.

Environmentally, this strong localism can have its positive side. Even though there is a very strong streak of independence and property rights advocacy in Vermont, Lines perceives
responsibilities people often feel as members of a community. Because people have such deep personal connections to the land, Lines thinks that, when considering possible uses of the land, “most people are a little hesitant to make it just a purely economic-driven thing.” He worries that might be changing as people with little connection to the community buy up land and treat it as an investment. Indeed, it is interesting to see in other interviews that locals are just as concerned about outside investment as they are outside political influences (especially the Tremblays).

Lines’ ambivalence about land use governance is important to recognize. There can be no doubt that he is passionate about the environment, but he is no longer a single issue voter. He has deep concerns about the well-being of the community, including financial security and livelihood issues, in which land often plays a pivotal role. He works to cultivate a respectful relationship with other land-users and tries to avoid judging them for practices that he sees as causing negative impacts on the environment. In pursuing the voluntary approach, Lines puts a high value on dialogue and understanding, but in order to maintain good relations he sometimes has to bite his tongue on issues that matter to him, trusting that the time will come to broach those subjects. There are hints that his forbearance has limits, that his support for the voluntary approach will waver if it doesn’t produce concrete results. This underlines the fact that his stances are dynamic and respond to the specifics of the context. It is not hard to imagine circumstances where his position hardens and he puts more faith in regulatory approaches – that position is already visible in many of his survey answers. The shifting of allegiance from one political approach to another is an important phenomenon to investigate. The kinds of ambivalences that can be seen in this interview are the ground on which these shifts take place; the seeds for the new position are visible, waiting for conditions that may or may not ever come.

7.1.3 William Arsenault
Of all the interviews that I conducted, the one with William Arsenault stands out for the intensity of the contradictions and tensions that Arsenault struggles to resolve. He loads significantly on the Government Sceptic factor (with a loading of 0.59), though the majority of Sceptics have a higher loading than he does. Looking at his individual responses, his lower loading might be partially due to his more extreme responses on some items than the average Sceptic (hard PPR
and the items on wilderness in particular stand out, see Appendix 2). At the same time, there are some notable cases where Arsenault’s responses veer well into Green Governance territory; e.g., his strong support for clustering (cluster +4) and the threat he sees in landowners who treat their land primarily as a financial asset (fin asset +4). What makes his case particularly interesting then is that he doesn’t represent an example of someone with mild opinions, sitting on the fence between the two factors. Rather, he comes across as a strong Government Sceptic who is having difficulty resolving some of the tensions that neoliberal political principles provoke when they are applied to concrete situations.

In his interview, Arsenault displays a deep and powerful connection to the working landscape. Growing up on a farm was clearly a defining experience for him, and he describes farm life in language that conveys his love for both the work and the setting. Whether it’s bouncing down the road on a loaded hay wagon at dusk trying to beat the storm or throwing down extra bedding for the cows on a sub-zero winter night, the depth of Arsenault’s feeling is unmistakable.

Feeding into that sense of deep connection is Arsenault’s awareness of himself as part of a living heritage, a way of life that has supported generations in Vermont. He marvels at the workmanship of stone walls that divided up pastures generations ago, still standing now in the middle of forests. He can’t help but imagine the ruggedness of those who built those walls at a time and place when a strained back could endanger a family’s very survival.

What comes out in the interview is Arsenault’s uncertainty about what to do with these intense attachments. The rural way of life, making your living from the woods or on a small family farm, is a cherished value for Arsenault. And judging by the marketing and the rhetoric in the state, it is a widely shared value, even for those who are watching from the outside. But the question for Arsenault is whether the rural way of life represents a public good or an individual preference. How that question is answered determines whether policies that seek to protect it are appropriate or not.

In many different instances, Arsenault draws a connection between personal preferences and what he calls fantasy. For him fantasy seems to consist of desires that have no basis in reality. The fantasy/reality antinomy is a refrain throughout the interview. Frequently he uses the term fantasy to characterize the romantic views newcomers have of Vermont, as was discussed above in Chapter 4. However, he also admits that he is susceptible to it as well, using the term to
chastise himself when his attachments to the working landscape carry him too far. In one case he is talking about the need to slow the subdivision of property:

If that land has been in generations (sic) and again they’ve logged it or kept it in forestry or agriculture, you know those people, it seems to me, ought to be… you know, there’s a certain respect…

(TY): that they are due?

Well, yeah, there too it’s a fantasy world. It’s not because they are due that, its just that in my view yeah, under my values you respect those people. [sigh].

In this extract, Arsenault struggles to decide whether his values should apply to the community more broadly. He is clearly reluctant to impose them, yet at the same time they are very meaningful to him, and he is disturbed when he sees them denied by people who carve up an old farm to generate some profit from the sale of house-sites.

This is such a destabilizing issue for Arsenault because he generally embraces the tenet of limited government, in which the state acts only in the interest of a narrowly defined public good. This narrow definition excludes anything that can be called a preference – recall Kingsbury’s rejection of minimum acreage zoning when it is based on aesthetics or a desire to live in a ten-acre area. Arsenault knows that the working landscape is valuable to him, but he can’t find a way to articulate it as a public good that warrants government action.

The fact that his own response is so passionate may actually be a strike against it in his view. He clearly expresses the need to remove emotions from the question of what is and is not appropriate land use. Emotions can cloud the perception of reality and the actions that are necessary to making a living from the land. In Chapter 4, I presented an extract of his interview where he talks about the sometimes unpleasant reality of farm work and woods work, giving the example of cutting down a tree and finding a birds nest in it. This isn’t something he relishes, but he tries not to let it affect him – he tries to “take that emotional aspect out” though he recognizes that there are obviously still emotions there.

While emotions seem to have little status politically for Arsenault, they blend into attachments that start to have more weight, though even here things are questionable. Values are fundamentally about attachments, about the belief in the value of some thing or state of affairs. The extract above reveals some of the ambiguity that inheres in them. Arsenault frames respect
for the land and those who shaped the landscape as one of his values, and as such not something that can be imposed on the community. But at the same time there is an undercurrent that distinguishes values from (mere) preferences. Arsenault can’t force anyone to respect the work of past generations, but his invocation of respect resonates with norms of civility and deference that have a more solid political footing. The relative solidity of values can also be seen in the fact that he can identify values as “skewed,” suggesting that they aren’t like opinions, to which everyone is entitled.

The working landscape sits uneasily within this welter of emotions, values and attachments. On one hand, Arsenault is aware of the emotions involved in his connection to the land and the traditional practices of working it. From this perspective, he tries to master his emotion and accept that change is inevitable and is the result of protecting the good that is the landowner’s private property rights. On the other hand, Arsenault sees the benefit that the working landscape provides as substantial and widely appreciated. The breadth of its appeal starts to make efforts to protect it justifiable. Tax abatement programs for farmers and forestland owners make sense to Arsenault because they compensate for social goods that these people provide the community. As he says, “[W]e have a resource which is very unique to Vermont, which is agriculture and forestry. Why wouldn’t you want to make sure that that land continues to be agriculture and forestry?”

This apparent consensus on the value of the working landscape may justify efforts to protect it, but it may also be superficial, hiding significant differences in what aspects people see as most important. Arsenault is concerned that people’s connection to the land has weakened as fewer and fewer people are actively involved in working the land. As a result, more people are satisfied with an image of rurality – they are happy seeing cows on the hillside as they drive past or maybe even looking at photos of cows on hillsides in magazines. But to keep the cows on the hillside means keeping farms viable by facilitating the generation of revenue from the fields and

87 “I think it’s what people value as a society. I think the worst thing would be if you get to the point where people are like – oh my god, we don’t see any more cows on the hillsides.” (9.7). What’s important in this quote is the phrase “what people value as a society” – he’s saying that people want to have working farms in their communities. The current trends are pushing small farms out of business, and he is asserting that people actually don’t want to see that happen, and it is appropriate for government to make some effort to prevent that. Not subsidies maybe, but then “you almost need them for these people to stay in business.”
forests. The generation of revenue – the extraction of resources – has inescapable effects on the environment. They may not be pretty, Arsenault suggests, but they are an integral part of making a living off the land.

In Arsenault’s frequently referenced distinction between fantasy and reality, fantasy appears as the domain of desires and preferences, where you can muse about how you’d like to see the world look. Reality intrudes in the form of economic imperatives that constrain your freedom of action, and in the form of conflicting visions. Many of the Government Sceptics were reluctant to respond to questions that asked them what they liked about the land or what they’d like the land to look like in the future. Arsenault was no exception, he countered my opening question about what aspects of the places he’s lived he most values by saying people romanticize farm life. It didn’t take much pushing, however, to get a very poetic description of his love for work in the woods and on the farm. He refused to let himself get carried away by these attachments, however.

It’s just hard, you kind of romanticize how you would like to see the land used, but there’s a reality check also, and there’s always a clash there. The reality is people own the land, they can pretty much do what they want, which is a good thing, they should be allowed to do what they want. It’s just the type of society that we live in, but at the same time, certainly more so now, with just the cost of land, I feel that you see people abusing ... yeah, kind of like abusing the land, kind of like for the purpose of greed more than anything else.

The clash is baldly stated here, in a form that might be surprising from a Government Sceptic. He affirms the importance of private property rights, but acknowledges that they give people the opportunity to treat the land badly. His use of the term “abuse” is striking, even more so for the fact that he pauses after uttering it, then repeats and intensifies it by ascribing greed as a motive. In subsequent passages, Arsenault clarifies that what he means by abuse of the land is breaking up large parcels of working land and selling them as residential sites to “turn the buck” with no consideration of the impacts on the community. This perspective accords with his +4 rating of \textit{fin asset}, which states that too many people treat land as a financial asset and are quick to subdivide and sell off lots.

At the same time, Arsenault is sympathetic to the plight of land owners who struggle to find ways to hold onto their land and pay the taxes on it. He describes the logging job he is working on where the $3000 that the landowners get from him probably won’t cover their property taxes
on the ten acre parcel, certainly not until the next time it’s ready to be logged. And he’s also sympathetic to the need to find money for such expenses as a child’s college education. He backs down a bit from his earlier attribution of greed, saying he can’t blame people for these economic choices, though the uneasiness of this position is palpable.

The larger scale processes that put pressure on landowners come in for criticism, above all the high rate of property taxes. Arsenault makes it clear that his family is willing to pay their fair share of taxes on their farm, but people have to realize that it’s hard to raise much revenue from the fields and forests. How this plays out concretely comes through in his discussion of managing the forests on the farm:

If you see a nice yellow birch, nice and straight and it’s about 14 inches and you’re hoping to get it to 18 so it’s maybe veneer quality in 20 years or so, if you open it up a little bit. That’s what you’re hoping for. And then you go back every three or four years and go “God, I hope that thing grew.” Because then you have to keep up with taxes, because you know twenty years from now you need that nice veneer tree to be a money tree, because you’ve got a bunch of firewood, that doesn’t pay for anything; it just pays maybe for your time.

As the revenue generating capacity of the land drops in relation to the carrying costs, Arsenault says people struggle not just to buy land, as they were able to do in his parents’ generation, but even just to hold onto it. He agrees with one aspect of the Use Value Appraisal program, that taxes on productive land should be based on what it can produce rather than the fair market value. But he objects to the fact that in order to get that tax break you have to enrol in a program and submit to the encumbrances that come with enrolment. It appears that his issue is with the tax structure itself and its basis on the market value rather than the use value of the land.

All of this leaves Arsenault uncertain about what the proper role of the government is in maintaining the working landscape and the businesses that it sustains. For all the pressure that taxes create, he recognizes that they are a part of doing business. An enterprise should be good at what it does so that it can pay its expenses. Taking this perspective, Arsenault begins to sound like he’s willing to see the market take over and separate the good businesses from the bad. Later in the interview, he admits that a lot of the little hill farms in the area may not be viable: “As much as I would love to keep those family farms operating, there is a reality too – nobody can make a go of it.” Whereas earlier, he seemed willing to accept the necessity of some government programs and even subsidies to keep people in business, at this point he sounds
more resigned to the idea that they may just have to make way for the next generation of uses. Throughout these discussions, he punctuates his observation with the statement that there are no clear cut answers, underlining the fact that he is deeply torn in his loyalties.

When I framed the situation in terms of free trade and globalization, Arsenault takes a step back and describes things more dispassionately. In general he supports free trade. He is philosophical about mahogany undercutting the market for maple or beech flooring – everyone is looking for a deal and he’d certainly be happy to have a mahogany floor himself. He starts to say that someone always gets the short end of the stick, but rephrases it to say that not everyone benefits equally and “maybe we happen to be the ones not benefiting, for the time being.” This position leads him to an uneasy stoicism, in which he accepts that change is inevitable and that people need to adapt to it. The larger global economic processes represent challenges of the type that business owners must constantly rise to meet. And yet, even as he accepts the inevitability of change, he continues to hope that somehow the working landscape will survive, that the “big decision players in politics […] do make the right decisions so we can keep what we have, or what we value in check.” This wish sits in tension with laissez-faire economics; it sees decision makers as having a duty to protect that which a community values, which in this case are threatened by the workings of the free market.

Overall, in Arsenault’s interview there is a palpable sense of a struggle between an acceptance that tends toward fatalism and a desire for some sort of protective action. At several points Arsenault describes the threats he sees to the working landscape and associated livelihoods and concludes that they are insurmountable, that there’s nothing you can do about them. Sometimes it’s because the causes are so large-scale, like the price of oil, or so complex, like the forces bringing a sawmill to bankruptcy. Sometimes it’s human nature that’s the problem: people don’t miss something until it’s gone and then it’s too late. The issue of property rights elaborates on the obstacle that human nature can present. Arsenault suggests that voluntary restraint on the part of landowners could preserve working lands – choosing to build a second house right beside your own and keeping the remainder open – but he acknowledges “that simply won’t happen.”

The fatalism doesn’t go unchallenged though. After telling himself that there’s nothing to do but accept some of these changes, Arsenault admits that “sometimes it’s just hard to accept because you don’t – it’s not necessary for things to be the way they are. But I don’t know how to change
them \small{laugh} and that’s frustrating.” Much of this he chalks up to politics, which he likens to chess, a game he admits he’s not good at. Feeling like you don’t have the capacity to change things is different from acceptance of the status quo. As Angela Morton commented (when rating \textit{free mkt ld}), you can recognize something as a reality without accepting it. Arsenault hovers between the two. He wants to be able to accept the changes coming to Vermont because that fits with his political principles, but his attachment to the heritage of the land pushes him to frame the changes as an unfortunate reality. Like a woodpecker nest destroyed in the felling of a tree.

Those are things that kind of bother me, but at the same thing, there’s nothing you can do about it, that’s just the way it is and you have to be I guess grateful that it \textit{is} that way too, that people can do what they want with their land, which - it is a good thing. You just have to keep telling yourself that it’s a good thing.

There can be no better example of the uncertainties many people feel about the political stances they adopt than Arsenault trying to convince himself that ultimately property rights is a good thing.

\section*{7.2 Political Projects and the Ambiguities of Enrolment}
I have described these three participants in detail to give a sense of the complexity of the interaction of norms in the process of adopting political stances on land use governance. The point that I want to highlight is that, despite strong responses to the survey questions, each participant voices a wealth of perspectives that don’t square easily with the standard line associated with property rights advocacy or environmentalism. They are not governed by a single set of norms when they decide how to position themselves on land use issues. To some degree each of them accepts the importance of norms associated with the other side, resulting in a substantial area of common ground. The difference comes in how these norms are balanced against each other. “Balance” is a useful term because it conveys a sense of the dynamic nature of the relationship between the norms. Shifting circumstances, or shifting interpretations of circumstances, have profound effects on how norms balance against one another.

The specifics of the balance that each individual strikes on a given issue are components in that person’s political outlook. These struck balances in effect position the individual in a political
field (though one of the points I’m insisting on is the provisional nature of that positioning). By prioritizing individuals’ livelihoods and the development rights of the property owner above the rights of a tree frog to continued existence, Kingsbury joins a well-established political tradition. In Chapter 2, I discussed the political rationality of neoliberalism, which is characterized above all in the faith it puts in the self-regulating market at the heart of governance. Kingsbury’s rejection of the Endangered Species Act displays a standard neoliberal logic – that it interferes with a landowner’s ability to put the land to its most profitable use and is therefore inappropriate. As I took care to point out, however, Kingsbury qualified that seemingly neoliberal stance in a number of other situations, for example when he suggested that corporations should be prevented from destroying wetlands that provide important ecosystem services or that septic regulations have improved the quality of life in rural locales. Elsewhere in the political field, Lines aligns himself with the environmentalist state that was ushered in by the landmark environmental legislation of the 1960s and ’70s. This could be seen as the environmental counterpart to the Keynesian Welfare State whose hegemony preceded the current neoliberal ascendancy (see Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010). Lines’ positions on the importance of environmental regulation and the need to maintain a degree of central authority over the social good that the environment represents fit into this political logic. Again, this positioning needs to be tempered with a recognition of the questions Lines raises about the fairness of the ways that environmental policies play out for individual landowners. These two individuals then represent tendencies leaning towards neoliberalism and centralism respectively.

I emphasize the word “tendencies” to avoid the implication that the appearance of certain normative stances automatically translates into enrolment in a neoliberal political project or a centralizing political project. The idea of enrolment in a political project could designate a range of things, so let me clarify how I imagine it.\(^8\) Certainly enrolment can lead to such concrete political actions as voting for a particular candidate, or lodging a complaint with a representative, or joining a protest. Crucially, though, enrolment happens at the level of belief as well as action. At this level, it is the logic producing the stance that is of particular interest. Here, enrolment means incorporation of particular ways of arguing for or justifying stances. In my discussion of

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\(^8\) The discussion of enrolment here draws from Hall’s (1988) discussion of the construction of support for Thatcherism.
Kingsbury’s interview, I pointed out a number of instances where I felt like he avoided an ideological take on a particular issue, for example his statement that “thoughtless, absurd, wasteful” abuse of resources justified a degree of regulation. His relative openness to some forms of regulation and his scorn for environmental abuses suggest to me an uncertain enrolment in a neoliberal project as it is typically imagined.

One aspect of enrolment is a consistency among adopted stances. The logic undergirding certain stances leads easily to other stances, whereas a different set of stances breaks that logic. Investigations of neoliberalism as a rationality of governance attend to such logics. So, for instance, the neoliberal insistence on the freedom of the individual calls for a corresponding responsibility, where the individual becomes the entrepreneur of her self – including her own well-being (Rose, 1999, p. 142). The reliance on government to assure well-being, in this view, incites passivity and dependency (ibid, p. 144). Better for the individual to take matters into her own hands, following the dictates of the “new prudentialism” (p. 159). And whatever interferes with those self-actualizing efforts to assure her future are called into question. So the securing of a retirement income becomes an undertaking that is appropriately the responsibility of the individual and obstacles presented by the habitat requirements of an endangered species must not be allowed to derail that undertaking. Socialized responsibility for retirement (e.g., Social Security) is a less and less favoured option. In this example, the logic of individual freedom is linked to individual responsibility and prudentialism which in turn is linked to the sanctity of retirement investment and the de-prioritization of endangered species.

Logical links can be far more multiplicitous than the example suggests, however. Responsibility is a good example of a node in this logic that can lead in a number of different directions. The object of responsibility can be the self, as explored above, but can equally be other people, animals or abstract entities, such as the land or environment. The link between responsibility and stewardship is a close one, so that neoliberal calls for increased individual responsibility may not be far from the expectation that individuals take care of their land, rather than seek maximum personal benefit from it (Blomley, 2004). Such expectations imply collective norms about what constitutes good treatment and bad treatment, in tension with neoliberal ideas of actions and preferences being individualized and mediated purely by the market. Violation of these collective norms can lead to a variety of responses, from social pressure and internal policing, to
cooperation with authorities so as to bring lawbreakers to justice. The point is that such issues as responsibility can be part of a neoliberal political project but they can then lead out of it as well. The emphasis on responsibility can lead to less neoliberal solutions – like policing or some sort of punishment for irresponsible people. A neoliberal stance may argue that people are responsible enough to allow the dismantling of regulatory structures, and supporters may embrace that vision because they believe in the idea of fostering responsibility. But then if people show themselves not to be as responsible as neoliberalism claimed, the erstwhile supporters may stick to the notion of responsibility rather than the neoliberal dismantling of consequences. The tensions between conservative law-and-order discourses and neoliberal laissez-faire discourses come into relief here (see Brown 2006), with many of the Government Sceptics advocating some sort of sanction or consequence for those who break reasonable rules.

The example of responsibility shows that delineating a consistent set of neoliberal stances is a significant challenge. This difficulty is reflected in theoretical interest in “hybrid” neoliberalisms (McCarthy, 2005a; Larner, 2003; Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010), in which neoliberal projects take on features of other political rationalities. This can result in contradictory stances within what is represented as neoliberalism. In part, these contradictions stem from neoliberalism’s reliance on a range of processes in order for value to be produced and accumulated – for example, the ecosystem services provided by wetlands or pollinators, or the neighbourhood effect on property values stemming from the actions of individual property owners. With enough stress some of these processes will break down and undermine the ability of neoliberal production to generate value. To varying degrees, neoliberal regimes have recognized this and sought out mechanisms to maintain conditions that allow economic productivity (Heynen et al., 2007). These mechanisms can be difficult to characterize. They often involve a broadened recognition of the values that are derived from land and land-based activities – including scenic vistas produced by agriculture, or flood control and filtration from wetlands. As such, they can appear as moves away from the narrow, productivist visions of land use that would typically be associated with early “roll-back” neoliberalism (McCarthy, 2005b; Hollander, 2004). At the same time, many of the mechanisms introduce markets or market-like instruments relying on monetization as a way to bring what had been externalities into the economic calculus, and therefore partake of a key element of neoliberal logic.
The relationship between markets and regulations is much tighter in these mechanisms than in the archetypical free market of neoliberal ideology. The market for sulphur dioxide emissions, carbon emissions or wetlands are all created by regulation of the harmful effects of pollution and wetland destruction; the continual reduction of the carbon cap is an instance of an ongoing intervention in the market. These markets would not exist were it not for the constraints on the market imposed by regulation. Yet at the same time, the introduction of markets to previously uncommodified areas seems to represent expansion of the market rather than constraint. All in all, it can be difficult to decide whether to emphasize the marketizing or the market-constraining effects of these mechanisms, which has implications for their characterization as neoliberal, “hybrid” or something else altogether.

The challenge that hybridity raises is that neoliberalism starts to be so diffuse that it can’t be defined (Barnett, 2005). These debates raise the question of what the utility of the label “neoliberal” is when it is assigned to a given stance. Such a label can try to capture the extent to which the individual who expresses the stance participates (or is enrolled) in a larger political movement or project. This connection of the individual to the larger political context is crucial if the implications of the stances are to be investigated. At the same time, it is worth remembering that the political projects in which an individual is enrolled are always under construction, responding to the exigencies of the political context. There are claims and counterclaims by actors within the political movement about which stances are appropriately included within the project and which are not. These claims are subject to the same performative dynamics that I investigated in the context of localness – the status of authority to comment on what stances are truly neoliberal, and therefore to be embraced or avoided, is based on accumulation of credibility among the right people (i.e., other authorities) in an iterative loop.

One feature of the performative claims operating in this context is that sometimes the argument to include a stance in the neoliberal project may be based on ideological purity or consistency, while at other times the argument may be more pragmatic, based on striking a balance between competing discourses in a way that appeals to supporters. The more pragmatically based projects are the type that are the focus of descriptions of hybrid neoliberalism. Although they are more difficult to analyze than projects with a clearer ideological foundation, they also represent the dynamic edge of political engagement. In descriptions of political projects, I contend that it
is important to maintain both a logical approach and an empirical approach. The logical approach is more suited to tracing the stances that give ideological projects their consistency. The empirical approach attends to the balance that political actors strike in order to gain support for their project.

Some illumination on the concept of enrolment in political projects can be gained by comparing the stances Kingsbury expresses to those expressed by Carleton, a participant with a similarly high loading on the Government Sceptic factor. As I mentioned above, one of the features that stands out in Kingsbury’s interview is its balanced character – his willingness to concede or even raise points that undercut stances that he has just expressed. Carleton’s interview more closely resembles a piece of political argumentation, with very few instances of softening or qualifying a stance. A related difference is that Carleton is far more likely than Kingsbury to pull out the implications of an example he gives. He makes connections and draws larger political conclusions regularly in his interview. So for instance, Carleton’s discussion of the increasing lack of connection with the land leads him to point out the crisis of inactivity among young people, which he chalks up to their being pampered and protected from work. This pampering in turn leads to a sense of entitlement, a lack of responsibility and ultimately abuse of the land. And entitlement is also the attitude Carleton sees in the wealthy newcomers who arrive in Vermont and post their land to keep anyone else from benefiting from it. Such sequences of connections often lead to broader, more abstract political stances. A discussion of the burden of regulation leads to the conclusion that the current system disenfranchises the working class and the young people. Carleton describes the preservationist view of the landscape as the product of the excessive influence of animal rights activists, which is tied to the liberal climate of the universities where classroom teachers are trained, so that the bias “snowballs its way down through.” What stands out in examples like these is the extent to which Carleton sews together different issues to describe the (mal)functioning of a whole system. His perspective is broader than Kingsbury’s, but it doesn’t pay as close attention to the details. Where Kingsbury concedes opposing points, Carleton is more selective in the examples he uses – attempting to build a persuasive argument more than exploring a dilemma.
One example demonstrates the differences between the two interviews particularly well. In his discussion of efforts to limit development, Carleton raises the issue of land trusts, saying that they are creating a cess pool of property rights issues. Then he makes a comparison to England in the 16th and 17th centuries, where he says a system of entails prevented inheritors of land from subdividing it, the effect of which was to bring the English economy to a near standstill. That experience led the American colonists to forbid entails in the New World. Carleton’s use of esoteric English legal history in an argument against the activities of present-day land trusts did not likely occur to him on the spot. Instead it suggests that Carleton has spent some time informing himself on these issues and refining his stances to achieve the consistency that is manifest in his interview. It is this achieved consistency that I am highlighting with the notion of enrolment. Carleton is much more easily described as enrolled in a neoliberal project than Kingsbury is, despite the fact that they have very similar loadings on the Government Sceptic factor.

Part of what makes a stance neoliberal is the occurrence of certain key features, such as the defence of private property rights, advocacy of lean government, hostility to regulation, or esteem for the private sector. But what makes Carleton seem to be firmly enrolled in a neoliberal project is the fact that these stances are touchstones that he returns to over and over to provide an explanation for societal problems. This constant reference back to core neoliberal stances is much less a feature of Kingsbury’s interview, making his enrolment in a neoliberal project much more indeterminate. Certainly there is potential for him to make the links between rigid bureaucracy and the need to roll-back regulation, but his awareness of some of the positive aspects of regulation attenuates that link. As a final illustration of the contrast between the two interviews, let me give an example from Carleton’s discussion of regulation’s encroachment on private property rights: “It’s socialism, pure and simple, approaching central control, what brought the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc crumbling to its knees. We spend so much time with goddamn regulations that we can’t do any work, and the value of your product, the cost of your product becomes inflated by the cost of compliance.” In this extract, the scope of Carleton’s thinking is clearly displayed. He sees Vermont land use politics as reflecting the epochal cold war conflict between the East and West. No such politicized statement is to be found in Kingsbury’s interview, despite his agreement that Vermont’s unfriendly business climate is a serious problem.
The best example of enrolment from another area of the political field is the case of Margaret Price. The political project in which she is enrolled hasn’t attracted the kind of interest that neoliberalism has in the geography literature, so there’s no ready-made label for it. Its main feature is the strong prioritization of the welfare of the environment. Similar to Carleton, she sees the problems facing the world as stemming from macro-scale processes, though the ones she identifies are very different from the culprits Carleton picks out. Price sees land use conflicts as essentially based on a fundamental opposition between two attitudes.

The biggest conflict of all is the attitude as to whether one individual actually morally owns the land and can do anything they want to it and destroy it for future generations or not. Or whether it's something that's collectively held in trust to be passed down through the generations. That whole attitude is the main difference. Two different ways of looking at it - The materialistic view in our society now really is that who ever happens to own it right now can just take whatever they want off of it and destroy it for future generations.

This emphasis on two conflicting attitudes paints the difference in stark, even exaggerated terms. As the survey question hard PPR\(^\text{89}\) revealed, very few Government Sceptics actually embraced this vision (4 of 12 giving positive response). And the only person to strongly agree with it – Arsenault – demonstrates incontrovertibly in his interview that he by no means supports the destruction of the land, even though he places very high value on property rights. Price’s depiction of the conflict, then, elides the tensions that pull most people in different directions simultaneously and obscures the concrete, material concerns that lead people to advocate for a right to extract resources. When her husband voices some disagreement, she concedes that the state plays a mediating role, but says “you still have the two extremes.” She goes on to argue that the attitudes are aided and abetted by political and religious structures: “The Christian view that humans were given dominion over the earth and people could do whatever they want with it, versus the Native American or some the old religions of old Europe, the Celtic view and so forth that the land was held in trust, the forests were sacred groves and that the spirit of nature was there and they shouldn’t go in and desecrate them.”

Price constructs the land use conflicts in Vermont as fundamentally ideological, where ideology is both politically and religiously grounded. The solution she offers to such a conflict is built on

\(^{89}\) “The owner of a piece of land has the right to do whatever he or she wants with it, even if that means degrading that land’s resources for future use.”
the model of the epiphany – she describes a neighbour child, whose family had no use for nature except as something to shoot at, having an awakening when Price let him handle a nuthatch (a woodland bird). She reports him saying “But these birds are real living things and they’re beautiful. I’m never going to shoot one again, and if my brother tries to shoot one I’m going to beat him up.” With her epiphany model and her view of the conflict as essentially ideological, Price stakes a claim on occupying the ground of truth. People’s eyes need to be opened – she describes the child as having been “blinded” before his encounter with the nuthatch. Throughout the interview she concedes little ground politically. She is a firm advocate of planning, a steadfast defender of environmental groups (whom Carleton calls “special interest hate groups”), and vociferous opponent to any land management that has negative ecological impacts (for instance the practice of clearing openings in the woods to encourage habitat for grouse and other game animals). The contrast between Price’s outlook and that of Lines is analogous to the differences I examined above between Carleton and Kingsbury. While Lines takes strong environmental positions, he also voices the dilemmas that they raise and displays a feeling of being torn between conflicting imperatives. By contrast, Price maintains a singular focus on her primary concern, the welfare of the environment, throughout the interview. She is solidly enrolled in a deep green political project.

As with neoliberalism, environmentalism comes in many variants (Dobson, 2007). Processes of hybridization that geographers discern in neoliberalism’s spread could also be used to account for different paths Greens have taken in seeking environmentally sustainable governance (see for example Steffen’s (2009) environmental spectrum). As such, it might be apt to describe Lines as equally enrolled in a political project, however the project is one that is more pragmatic and hybrid than the one Price is enrolled in. The criterion of consistency of stances that is one diagnostic tool for enrolment becomes less incisive when the project in which a person is enrolled itself displays inconsistent stances. This theoretical tension between definitions of political projects based on core principles and definitions based on actual (conflicting) stances cannot be wished away. I believe it is worth recognizing both kinds of political projects but recognizing that they describe different kinds of entities that function very differently in the political realm. Ideologically defined political projects are abstractions with real consequences; they represent goals to which adherents aspire and as such they also become prizes that authorities within a movement battle for the right to define. Pragmatically defined political
projects are more prosaic, even parochial, given that they are inextricably linked to a specific time and place and to the contest for hegemony between different interests that takes place in that context. The fact that battles and contests feature in both kinds of projects is not accidental. And in fact it is this contestation that brings the two different models back together. Ideologically defined projects can never fully sever the connection to concrete political struggles. The performative jockeying for the positions of authority are rooted in the messy reality of political stances adopted on concrete issues.

Both ideological and pragmatic projects arise from the crucible of public scrutiny – as members of the public give incipient projects consideration they are forced to hammer out key principles and also decide on compromises. Under the pressure of this scrutiny, the projects may become more coherent, or they may fragment into multiple competing projects. But whatever path they take, this exposure to the public refines them and gives them shape. Not all political projects have been through the fire in this way, and as a result they may be even more difficult to pick out from among the array of stances appearing on the political landscape. To speak of enrolment in such cases may be somewhat misleading, but there may be something taking place that is worth trying to describe.

Arsenault is uncertainly enrolled in a neoliberal project, and there is very little indication that he is enrolled in a centralizing environmental project. These are the two most evident political projects in the context of debate over land use governance in Vermont; key stances associated with these projects appear in many of the interviews and they are roughly analogous to the two factors that emerged out of the Q analysis. However, Arsenault expresses some stances that recall a different political project that has been historically important to political conflicts over land – agrarianism. These stances raise the possibility that there may be a third project in the political landscape. While I do see definite traces of stances associated with agrarianism both in Arsenault’s views and in those of other participants, at the time of research they hadn’t coalesced into a coherent project that was identifiable within my sample.

Agrarianism is a political vision that believes that farms and farmers play a uniquely important role in society, not just for their production of food but also for their broader social, political and environmental influence (Mariola, 2005). The reasons for viewing farming in this way vary. Where some agrarians have stressed the innate pleasure of working the land, others highlight the
sense of place and social cohesion that develops around farms. Still others – and here Thomas Jefferson looms particularly large – make the argument that farming breeds virtues that are crucial to the smooth functioning of society (ibid.). Such differences in focus can play out as explicit tensions in agrarianism; Montmarquet (1989) highlights one such tension that he sees as encompassing many others – expansionist agriculture versus limited agriculture. At the heart of expansionist agriculture is the notion of progress, tied to gains in efficiency and in production. This view fits comfortably with a focus on the well-being and livelihood requirements of the individual farm family. By contrast, limited agriculture seeks to operate within what it perceives to be natural limits and puts more emphasis on non-economic and less tangible products from agriculture. The perspectives of limited agriculture have come to predominate in what has been called the New Agrarianism of recent decades (Freyfogle, 2001; Berry, 1977), but other strands of agrarianism still crop up even though they are not always explicitly identified as such.

Three people expressed stances that strongly call to mind agrarian ideals in the course of their interviews – William Arsenault, Marilyn Collins and Edward Collins. Others who displayed potentially agrarian ideals were the Goodmans and James Flannery. The factor analysis of the survey responses however did not find any factors that grouped these individuals together⁹. I interpret this as reflecting the fact that individuals draw on the disparate strands of agrarianism quite differently depending on other normative stances that they have adopted. At the same time, it also suggests that agrarianism does not hold a place as a coherent political project distinct from neoliberalism and environmental centralism in the contemporary Vermont context. An alternative interpretation is that my sample, both of statements and of people, did not capture an agrarian project that does in fact exist. This is a possibility that merits further investigation, but I believe it is safe to say that agrarianism doesn’t appear as a distinct political project to the extent that the other two do.

We should recognize that agrarianism can have important effects without being a distinct political project at this particular historic moment in Vermont. Key normative stances associated

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⁹ One step in Q analysis that allows theory testing is what is called judgmental rotation (Brown, 1980, 224-239), whereby factors are rotated through the point swarm to seek more easily interpreted alignments that don’t necessarily maximize variance. My effort at judgmental rotation was unable to produce a factor on which all those who expressed agrarian stances loaded.
with agrarianism appear as submerged threads in the other political projects. Arsenault displays a number of such stances. He believes strongly in the value of working land as working land, whether farm fields or wood lots, and that keeping it in these uses provides a common good to the rest of society. He states that his values involve respecting the work that previous generations have put into maintaining a landscape that can support the local community, and he views the profit-driven carving-up of that landscape as an abuse of that legacy. He describes working on the land in terms that convey a sense of innate pleasure. He worries about the effects of our society’s progressive disconnection from the land. These are all easily recognizable elements of many strands of agrarianism. At the same time, the conflicts that these stances raise for Arsenault are one of the most striking features of his interview. These values conflict with other values of autonomy, independence and the freedom from government oversight. It is important to recognize that this is not just a question of agrarianism conflicting with neoliberalism; it is a question of different threads within agrarianism. As Freyfogle (2001) notes, agrarianism has always had an aspect that valorizes the autonomy and good judgment of the farmer, and that holds tenaciously to private property rights.

Given the presence of this range of stances in agrarianism, it is tempting to imagine then that Arsenault’s particular blend of neoliberal stances and attachments to the working landscape taken together is actually best described as an agrarian outlook, or enrolment in an agrarian project. I don’t believe this is the best interpretation, however. The blend of agrarian values represented by Arsenault doesn’t represent a political project as much as a political conundrum that haunts agrarianism, and as such the notion of enrolment seems inapt. Moreover, agrarian stances can be brought together in ways that are very different from what Arsenault displays. The Collinses express many of the same stances that Arsenault does but they add in some that are enough different as to shift the tenor of their perspective to another point entirely in the broader political field. Two particularly salient examples are their emphasis on the natural limits that ecology imposes on the agricultural system and their impassioned critique of the corporate dominance of agribusiness. The point, then, is that while there are definitely people who are attached to agrarian stances, it doesn’t make sense in this historico-geographical context to speak of them as enrolled in an agrarian project.
The presence of submerged agrarian threads in both of the main political projects that I identified raises intriguing prospects. Even if agrarianism doesn’t register as a political project on par with neoliberalism or environmental centralism currently, it is conceivable that circumstances will arise that knit the threads together into a more coherent project. Freyfogle makes the claim that something like this is happening with the New Agrarianism, and this vision does have adherents in Vermont, as Hewitt (2009) documents and indeed as I found in my other set of interviews. It may be only a matter of time before methods such as a Q survey can pick out such a vision more clearly in the general population.

As the preceding examinations suggest, the defining boundaries of political projects are not as easily marked out as the use of the term, and allied conceptualizations, implies. The reason for this is obvious given a moment’s thought: what “political project” designates is a composite of stances and actions emanating from a collection of different actors and arising in response to a range of different circumstances. Each stance and each action will be slightly, or substantially, different from any other. The abstract notion of a project is an effort to bring order to them by finding a common essence, whether a common set of beliefs or motives or interests. This is not only a post facto analytic effort; the identification of a political project has crucial influence over subsequently adopted stances and actions. For that reason, if for no other, radically constructionist critiques of the attempt to identify political projects – of the type that argue that any delineation of a political project is arbitrary and therefore unsustainable – would be misguided. The social construction of a political project, which by definition is a never-finished undertaking, is a rich area of study, one that we should take care not to skip over by too quickly adopting reifications in our analyses.

Political projects, despite their fuzzy outlines, have a social reality and impact that cannot be ignored. The concept represents an attempt to convey the collective effort of variously defined groups of people to enact political changes (or defend the status quo). This effort is composed of a multitude of smaller efforts, pursued by individual political actors yet informed by discussions within the group and across the broader society. Each of these political actors has a different connection to the political project; one person’s enrolment may have a completely different quality than another’s despite the fact that they have adopted broadly similar stances.
Throughout this dissertation I have insisted on the importance of these differences; my critique of the moral economy literature is based on its failure to account for them. I argue that we need to know the specific paths by which different people arrive at a normative stance – how they balance different values and social objectives along the way. Such knowledge will lead us away from conceptions of social groups or classes as ideological blocs and from the polarizing politics that result from these conceptions. Recognizing the different degrees and modes of enrolment that people manifest can allow us to develop a more finely differentiated picture of popular support for political projects, and such a picture in turn can allow us to approach politics as an opportunity to hear people’s concerns and see what we can do to accommodate them, rather than as a battle where we seek to triumph over our opponents.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this dissertation I have sought to provide an appropriately complex depiction of the dynamics of land use politics in Vermont. Although the political landscape is unarguably marked by polarization and hostility, I argue that these aspects represent only one part of the larger political reality. Accepting the idea that polarization is the essential character of Vermont land use politics (or, by extension, of U.S. politics more generally) runs the risk of maintaining or even producing the very polarization that is assumed. Instead, I have approached the topic by looking for internal tensions or inconsistencies in the discourses of my interview participants, not to point out hypocrisy, but to gain insight into the difficulties they face in their efforts to reconcile conflicting interests.

A major source of the inspiration for this work is the scholarship on the moral economy. As initiated by Karl Polanyi and elaborated by E.P. Thompson and James Scott, the idea of an economy embedded in society has raised a much needed challenge to bloodless, a-cultural accounts of the way people make decisions about the allocation of resources. This scholarship helps to put normative outlooks at the centre of analysis, rather than leaving them as epiphenomena that are properly mediated by a supposedly neutral market. It argues that the norms and values of a community are what give legitimacy to, or withhold it from, the political-economic institutions that are charged with distribution of social goods. The market is one such institution and may be accepted as appropriate in a range of contexts; however, there are situations where many in a community come to see the working of the market as so unfair that they rise up to block its operation and put in place other institutions. In contrast to many who write in the moral economy tradition, the point of departure for my research is not a community’s act of rebellion against an economic institution. However, moral economic insights have led me to investigate the ways people determine the appropriateness of different methods of governing the distribution of the social goods derived from the land.

My efforts to discern a moral economy operating among my research participants yielded much more ambiguous results than those that Scott and Thompson found. This may be due to the complexity introduced into social life by modernity, including the multiplication of points of
identification for social subjects. Communities may simply be more fragmented than they once were. However, I suspect that the even the pre-modern communities at the centre of the classic studies displayed a broader range of normative outlooks than moral economists account for. If I am right in this, then the use of the term “moral economy” to designate a community’s or class’ normative outlook can gloss over important tensions within those groups. Even more problematic are efforts to take what are essentially normative concepts such as exploitation and treat them as though they are objective. In my critique of such moves in Scott’s *Moral Economy of the Peasant*, I emphasize the importance of the factors that could lead to different assessments of exploitation and of the legitimacy of different policies that govern the distribution of social goods.

This critique leads to an effort to reconceptualize the paths that individuals take as they adopt different political stances. I take as a springboard an individual’s assessment of the legitimacy of a demand or claim that a policy makes on her. I argue that this assessment does not look at the policy in isolation; rather, the individual considers the policy’s larger political context. In particular, she looks at other policies that are linked to the first one within a larger political project. Assessing this package as a whole could lead her to accept a policy she otherwise wouldn’t because she judges the outcome of the political project to be beneficial overall. The assessment of the complex claims of a political project, particularly future-oriented promises, is not straightforward. People bring different models of the way things work to that task, and these different causal models lead to different determinations of the likely outcome and the relative risk of supporting one project over another. How people acquire these different causal models then becomes theoretically significant. Both the assessment of political projects and the adoption of causal models depend crucially on how the individual in question judges the credibility of the sources of the projects and models. In many cases, she may have limited factual information on which to base her judgment, so she turns to proxies that she takes as significant indicators of a source’s trustworthiness. These proxies incorporate social attributes that she takes to signal a general similarity to her own outlook. The extent to which an individual relies on such social indicators or on a more narrowly rational analysis of “facts” (which I put in quotes in recognition of their socially constructed aspects) is a complex matter and varies substantially from person to person and context to context.
This admittedly complicated theory of how an individual comes to adopt a political stance should convince that it would be too simplistic to just assume that a stance is a product of an individual’s membership in a community or class. Both communities and classes are too heterogeneous to serve as a blueprint for their member’s normative outlooks. This model opens up space for the operation of different modes of influence within these collective bodies.

In the chapter “Vermonters and Newcomers,” I lay out the issue of the social divide in Vermont and consider what issues seem to play an important role in inscribing that divide and in constituting the groups facing each other across it. On the surface, residential status seems to be the key – whether someone is a “flatlander” or is a Vermonter with solid ancestral links to the state. These divisions flare up in situations where different modes of life come into conflict. A closer look reveals that the residential labels serve as a rough shorthand designating the more substantive mode of life battles. When the labels are deployed, they are attached to other attributes (such as wealth or occupation) that have more direct influence on an individual’s mode of life. The linking of some attributes to Vermonters and others to newcomers is an effort to translate the legitimacy of “belonging” that comes with localness onto a particular set of practices and views. With this understanding of the conflict, it then becomes possible to look past the apparent Vermonter/newcomer distinction and try to comprehend the different modes of life that are being tied to it. To do this, I introduce the notion of cultural complexes.

Cultural complexes are the submerged dichotomy that residential status covers for. So the label “Vermonter” is used to designate people showing traits from what I call the Local cultural complex, and “flatlander” or “out-of-stater” does the same job for those from the Outlander cultural complex. As I have developed the idea in the context of the politics of land use in Vermont, cultural complexes have five main components – residential status, class, political outlook, social interactions and practices. Within each component there are states that are associated with the Local cultural complex (e.g., Vermonter, hunter, working class) and states that are associated with the Outlander complex (e.g., newcomer, skier, wealthy). Each of the components affects a person’s belonging to a cultural complex, but none is positively determining; so, it’s possible to be a newcomer that otherwise displays the traits of the Local complex or a Vermonter that is in other respects a Outlander.
From the consideration of the multiple components of cultural complexes, I turn my attention more specifically to political orientation. I explore this component using the statistical approach of Q methodology. A factor analysis of stances as measured by a survey allowed me to pick out two clusters among my participants. Looking at the most characteristic statements of each factor, I settled on the names Green Governance and Government Scepticism. This analysis also conveys a sense of how closely an individual conforms to the average response of the cluster, allowing for the consideration of gradations and areas of disagreement. The two factors served as the baseline for the remainder of my analysis: they were convenient points of reference that allowed me to make the complexity of participants’ outlooks more comprehensible. I sought to understand the logics that animated the “average outlook” of the factor as well as the logics that motivated individual participants’ departure from that average.

In the following chapter, I examine political stances in more detail by considering the different contexts where land use governance is disputed. Vermont as a whole has embraced the idea of the working landscape, which sidelines some of the stronger variants of preservationism and celebrates the historical and ongoing use of the land’s resources. However, beneath this apparent unanimity are significant differences about how, and how intensively, the land is to be used. The realities of modern agriculture sit uneasily with the pastoral image that Vermont often uses to present itself to the outside world and even to itself. Water pollution, heavy machinery, chemical use and biotechnology are some of the flashpoints of controversy that feed into the political divisions, with locals tending to defend conventional practices and outlanders pushing for a transition to organic or “sustainable” agriculture. Forestry presents its own controversies, including some of the most contentious issues at the turn of the century. The designation of wilderness on public lands, and the manner in which it was accomplished, has provoked pitched state-wide battles twice in the past 15 years. One of the concerns that designation raises is the reduction of timber sources for mills that are already struggling. In both agriculture and forestry, the Government Sceptic perspective puts a primary emphasis on livelihood issues. However, it is clear from both interviews and survey responses that this should not be interpreted as a lack of concern for the environment. Although their ranking of priorities differs from that of the Greens, there is still a visible stewardship ethic animating many of their perspectives.
The conversion of the working landscape to a residential landscape presents dilemmas to people of all political persuasions. Newcomers are often drawn to Vermont because of its rural character and don’t want to see it turned into another suburbia. However their very decision to come to the state is what drives much of the conversion. Newcomers who support land use controls are accused of displaying the hypocritical “last one in, shut the gate” mentality. Different dilemmas confront supporters of working landscape industries. The desire to find ways to maintain the land base for these industries often bumps up against a hostility to land use controls. Government Sceptics want to preserve a landowner’s option to sell land on an open market with no restrictions on use, recognizing that these assets in land are critically important to many people’s livelihoods. Yet the more landowners exercise these options, the more the working landscape dwindles, to the point where a viable land base for industry may no longer exist. Of course, other culprits can be identified for the decline of the working landscape (such as regulation and workers compensation premiums), but many Sceptics recognize the fundamental tension that property rights introduce to the issue.

Hunting and recreational uses of land more generally add another twist to the already complicated dynamics of land use politics. Many of the people engaging in these practices depend on access to private land, and Vermont has unusually strong protections of public access that make it cumbersome for a private landowner to bar entry for hunting (and by extension other pedestrian uses of the land). Access issues create some tensions for the Local cultural complex; key practices such as hunting can be stymied by people exercising their private property rights. As a result Government Sceptics show ambivalence about legal protections of access, some preferring a more voluntary approach, others happy that the protections exist. The other big issue, motorized recreation, has been fought out more frequently over access to public lands, with Locals generally advocating for equal access for all forms of recreation and outlanders leaning towards restricting motorized use.

The four sub-chapters on key land use issues all show some common features which I highlight in the last sub-chapter focusing on governance. Concepts of property provide a useful starting
point by highlighting the various benefits that are derived from a social good\(^{91}\) (such as a parcel of land) and considering normative stances on how those benefits should be distributed. Absolute concepts of property, which suggest that landowners have total authority over all benefits derived from the land, are rhetorically important for Government Sceptics but in practice virtually no one holds to them completely. There is near universal recognition that the public has rights over at least some of the benefits associated with private land. This leads to a discussion of public goods more generally, where a key point of contention is the point at which private preferences rise to the level of the public good. The grey area between these two zones brings into focus the fact that the public good is established through normative debates in which values play just as important a role as they do in the realm of private preference. It may be useful to shift thinking about public goods from a mode where something is either a public good or it isn’t, to a mode that sees various recognized goods prioritized, with the top priorities being the focus of public action and the lower priorities pursued through private initiative.

In order to balance an array of benefits or public goods, it is useful to survey the contenders. I briefly consider some of the key benefits or goods that relate to the land: the integrity of the environment, the aesthetics of the landscape, traditional livelihoods and settlement patterns, opportunity, and autonomy. By considering these goods as benefits that people are striving to balance, we avoid the implication that someone who views autonomy as the highest priority must therefore be anti-environment. Coming into view are the dilemmas that individuals face when they value multiple goods that are incompatible in certain contexts. In the debates about private property rights, it could be useful to seek a fuller understanding of defenders’ positive attachment to autonomy and opportunity, as well as how they relate to goods that they place lower priority on but may value highly nonetheless.

The way these different prioritizations are operationalized in government policies and structures adds another layer of complexity to an already contentious situation. Those who prioritize autonomy also champion voluntary approaches to governance. These approaches depend on the assumption of responsibility by individuals and communities for areas that would otherwise be

\(^{91}\) Social goods are not to be confused with public goods. The former are any items (material or abstract) upon which society puts some value. The latter are a subclass of social good that are seen to belong in some significant way to the public at large (Arnold, 2001).
subject to government oversight, in keeping with the emphasis on integrity that is another strand of this outlook. A favourite pathway of voluntary governance approaches is education. However, conflict over the content of education highlights the fact that discourses are neither innocent nor neutral, and this pathway defers conflict rather than solving it.

The main alternative to voluntary governance is government oversight and regulation. Government Sceptics concede that such methods are sometimes necessary and effective. Conversely some Green Governance advocates recognize that even where government oversight is called for, the implementation leaves much to be desired. The inefficiencies of bureaucracies and the perverse effects of regulation are topics that appear in the interviews of Greens as well as Sceptics. Nor is the fallout for the business climate in the state an exclusive concern of the Sceptics, though it is certainly among that group that concern reaches fever pitch. The place of competition is also more nuanced than is often portrayed; while they support competition in theory many Sceptics are uneasy with watching local businesses fail when some form of government assistance could have prevented that outcome. At the same time, many Sceptics lay the blame for the failure on the regulatory burden that local businesses face and the absence of a level playing field.

In the penultimate chapter of the dissertation I show how the tensions described in previous chapters play out in the interviews and surveys of selected participants. Larry Kingsbury and Ken Lines have high loadings on the Government Sceptic and Green Governance factors respectively. By looking in detail at the concerns they raise about land use governance, the logic of the stances they adopt starts to become more evident. The limits beyond which a stance starts to be eroded by other considerations come into view. These features are even more visible in the third portrait I present, that of William Arsenault. Although a strong Government Sceptic in many respects, Arsenault displays an extraordinary degree of candour in discussing the tensions he encounters as he tries to reconcile his various values and stances.

The stances each of these three individuals expresses are the product of their efforts to negotiate the range of land use issues they encounter in their daily lives. These negotiations lead to compromises or otherwise ideologically “impure” outlooks. Likewise, the factor averages, drawn from the empirical examination of 32 perspectives, are not always internally consistent. The relationship of these empirically described stances to political projects such as neoliberalism
is challenging to tease out. Part of this challenge stems from the indeterminacy of the political projects themselves and whether they are conceived in reference to core abstract principles or the elaboration of actual policies. I argue that both conceptions yield valuable insights as long as they are recognized to operate differently. Ideologically defined political projects play an important role at the level of representation and rhetoric. They provide discursive tools for people to think with – the building blocks of causal models. They are also at the centre of struggles over the defining norms of a community, and provide points of articulation or attachment for those who become enrolled in the political project (as I illustrate with the examples of Mel Carleton and Margaret Price). Pragmatically defined political projects, that is projects that emerge in the push and pull of policy making, have more in common with the negotiated, compromised stances emerging from the interviews. They are the product of a specific history and geography, the outcome of a particular configuration of forces coupled with a calculation of possibilities and probabilities. They are a group’s assessment of which of their objectives they can reasonably hope to achieve. The two forms of political project blend into one another: ideologies emerge out of concrete conditions and political actions must have some ideological backing to achieve legitimacy. Nevertheless, the recognition of these two countervailing tendencies can help to specify the different kinds of attachment that enrolment in a political project can consist of. Enrolment in ideological projects, with their emphasis on consistency, leaves far fewer openings for engagement than enrolment in pragmatic projects (or uncertain enrolment, for that matter). The fact that enrolment in ideological projects was relatively rare among the participants in my research leaves me hopeful that land use politics are not as intransigent a problem as they are often made out to be.

I also explored the possibility that another political project is operating, or perhaps coalescing, in the contemporary Vermont context. Agrarianism has interesting cross-cutting features, appearing to some extent in both factor groups. While it didn’t have a consistent enough set of stances in my sample to show up as a distinct factor of its own, agrarianism can be discerned in submerged threads that quietly insist on a broader vision of the value of land than is recognized in purely neoliberal or environmental perspectives.

The values associated with the land, as I have shown throughout this dissertation, are multifaceted and interact in a complex manner. Attention to practices highlights this complexity; in
the pursuit of a given practice, people interact with the land in ways that can bring together multiple values simultaneously. Arsenault’s description of harvesting a hay crop conveys the value of tradition and the annual cycle of work, the way it brings the family together, and the care for the animals for whom the crop is destined. There is also an implicit recognition of the importance of the livelihood to be earned this way – that this is the good life, and that the ability of people to live the good life is worth trying to protect.

Political projects such as neoliberalism have trouble dealing with the multiplicity of values that attach to the land. Neoliberalism seeks to put the market in a position of primacy, emphasizing the monetary value of land. Other values can be accommodated to the extent that they fit into the market logic. Unfortunately, many of the key values do not fit into such logic easily. Broadly distributed common goods like ecosystem services raise difficult questions of who would pay and who would be entitled to receive payment in neoliberal arrangements. More fundamentally, they raise the questions of what the effects are of turning every aspect of our environment into tradable commodities and whether that will lead to an unprecedented concentration of wealth, including the natural wealth that to at least some extent had been seen as a birthright. If values are negotiated only through the market, it means that those with little ability to pay have no avenue to assert the importance of their values. Capitalism’s “creative destruction” (Harvey, 2007) will find new uses for the land as old uses fail to generate enough revenue to justify their continuance. Such an outcome is deeply disturbing to many in Vermont, from all points of the political field. How to respond to such a possibility, however, is not clear for either of the factor groups that I identified. Some interventions in the market are deemed acceptable even by some Government Sceptics, but a fatalism also arises that counsels against developing too strong an attachment to a given state of affairs.

The main alternative to market-based land governance enshrines the public in an oversight role, often by means of regulations enacted by democratically elected governments. Such oversight rankles Government Sceptics and even occasionally some among the Green Governance advocates. However, there is also a widespread sentiment that regulation is appropriate under the right conditions – for example, septic regulation to prevent contamination of water resources. Such areas of consensus suggest that strongly ideological stances, such as that which opposes regulation, are modulated substantially in practice, when concrete impacts on the land are under
consideration. People that adopt quite different political stances may actually agree that such land-derived benefits as traditional livelihoods, healthy forests and clean waterways are valuable. What differs is the lengths that people are willing to go to protect them – how they balance or prioritize disparate, sometimes conflicting, values. Still, the political challenge of agreeing on an appropriate balance of recognized values is fundamentally different, and arguably more tractable, than that of brokering a deal between groups that disagree over what is even valuable in the first place.

I have no intention of underestimating the challenge involved in reducing land use conflict in Vermont or anywhere else. What I hope to have accomplished is a more careful pinpointing of the sources of conflict. Understanding the process by which a person takes a set of values and translates them into a political stance has the effect of opening up more points of engagement. It foregrounds the way information about key biophysical and social processes is incorporated into causal models that justify certain stances as a way to protect values. These causal models might be made subjects of discussion in such a way as to minimize antagonism, by focusing on what we can know about key processes and how we can get better, more convincing information. I suggested that such a discussion on the factors that affect erosion might shift Kingsbury’s stance; alternatively it might indicate weaknesses in the models propounded by natural resource managers.

Causal models play an important role in justifying stances, but they may also have more fundamental roles in the prioritization of values themselves. In cases where aspects of the land are valued because they instrumentally serve other values (Palmer, 1997), that connection is also mediated by causal models. Any instrumental, as opposed to intrinsic, values that are attached to the land are therefore potentially subject to modification if new understandings of causal processes emerge.

While causal models point to some potentially productive ways to address conflicts, it would be a mistake to focus entirely on the logical or rational aspect of how people adopt stances. As I argued in Chapter 4, the credibility that subtends the spread of causal models is the product of an array of factors. In deciding which authorities or sources of information to trust, people don’t just turn to the standard “experts” with their formal credentials. Much of the trust that people place in an authority and his or her explanations is derived from social “intuitions” – judgments
that draw on the authority’s social characteristics as a way of telling how receptive he or she is to the subject’s concerns. This is where an understanding of cultural complexes comes into play. We cannot understand land use conflicts without understanding the social divisions that fracture a community.

While social divisions may be a cause of land use conflict, they may also be an effect of the way people use the land. Land-based practices and social interactions, including hunting and recreation as well as paid work, are key institutions that give form and substance to social groups. Participation in key practices can serve as an indicator of group membership (Bye, 2009). This chain of linkages between land-based practices, social identities and political stances – and the complexity of the relationships among the various components – is important to acknowledge. It allows us to see that conflicts that are expressed in political forums might be addressed by seeking to understand how people pursue practices, and more specifically what aspects of those practices contribute most meaningfully to their social identities.

This ultimately brings us back around to the question of moral economies, with which I opened the dissertation. The moral economy literature makes the important intervention of opening up the question of how different communities adopt distinctive normative perspectives on economic matters such as land use. It creates a scholarly space for the recognition of the importance of culture and tradition in politics and economics. My notion of cultural complexes responds to the questions raised by the moral economists; it seeks to provide a more fine-grained analysis of how broadly shared normative political perspectives within a social group arise. In the end, I see my model as incorporating the dynamism of individual’s articulation or enrolment in political projects more explicitly than the original moral economy literature does, though in some ways this is a difference in emphasis. There can be an ongoing, productive conversation between approaches such as the moral economy approach that have traditionally focused on broader-scale political processes and approaches such as the one I have pursued here that place the emphasis on how individual members of specific social groups are enrolled in, but also transform, those broad-scale movements.
The focus of this dissertation has been the logics animating normative views on land use and how these logics relate to other social characteristics. I have proposed a model to account for the social divisions in Vermont that are apparent in land use debates. This model uses the notion of cultural complexes to tie normative political stances to residential status, class, practices and social interaction. A key feature of this model is that it displays a flexibility in the way these five components relate, so that it’s possible to be a part of a cultural complex without sharing all the expected characteristics.

This model is provisional; the research presented in this dissertation provides some evidence to support it, but a more systematic testing is needed. The sample of 32 (or 33) participants is not large enough to make statistically significant claims about the relationship between different components of the cultural complexes. Furthermore, the theoretical sampling methods I used likely over-represent some groups and under-represent others. Even with these caveats in mind, some patterns begin to suggest themselves (See Table 4). For instance, it is striking that all of the Government Sceptics were born in Vermont. The occupational profile of the two groups is also distinctive – the Sceptics are mostly involved in land based work (agriculture and forestry), construction, real estate or service work for home- or landowners. The Greens are dominated by educators, with a strong showing of farmers and a sprinkling of other occupations, including some that appear among the Sceptics. Income information shows the Sceptics falling in the middle brackets, while the Greens cover the whole spectrum from high to low. Key practices such as hunting and motorized recreation are ambiguous, with hunting actually more prevalent among Greens but with motorized recreation favoured by Sceptics and non-motorized recreation dominated by Greens. Again, these results can only be taken as a crude indication of trends that might be borne out in subsequent research, however they do raise intriguing possibilities.

One area of the model that this research has little to contribute towards is the question of social interaction. Methodologically, this is a challenging issue to address. I include it in the model because I believe that cultural complexes emerge out of actual encounters between people not just by virtue of shared characteristics. I conceive of a cultural complex as an interconnected group of people who pass ideas, views and arguments back and forth between them. This component, then, insists on the concreteness of the complex, its groundedness in an actual community. The relationship of social interactions with practices is close – social interactions
take place through practices – but they are not identical. Two people could share the practice of hunting or of gardening without interacting.

All of these issues make social interaction a significant aspect to any description of social divisions and cultural complexes, yet, as I mentioned, not an easy one to capture. In order to do justice to it, a researcher would have to develop a schematic view of the community, a way of characterizing interactions and a daunting body of data on the huge number of dyadic relations between members of the community. A somewhat less demanding approach might involve an extensive use of chain referral (or snowball) sampling to trace out the interactional networks and an interview script that asks participants to characterize their interactions with key people in the network. Either approach would require a major research commitment to a single community.

This sort of research on social interactions would be invaluable to testing and further developing the performative dimensions of political projects and enrolment. It would shed light on the sources and diffusion of norms and causal models. Particularly interesting in this light would be an exploration of the concrete factors affecting the credibility of different social actors, mass media, and other sources of norms and models. A related undertaking might be intensive research that explored with an individual how his or her views and understandings were formed and what influences played a decisive role. Such an approach would be particularly valuable in tying normative stances to the (broadly defined) political events in the individual’s environment, thereby allowing insights into processes of enrolment that would be hard to discover in any other way. Research in this vein would address the gap in empirical scholarship on the relation of individual subject formation to larger socio-political movements and processes.

The research represented by this dissertation was conceived as a modest step towards filling that gap. It has aimed at providing a serious consideration of the “reflexive practices” (Collier and Ong, 2005), and the logics, that people engage in when they adopt normative stances on land use governance. I found these practices to be so rich, so full of thought and experience and integrity, that they deserve to be more widely known. It is my hope that people on both sides of the social divide, in Vermont or elsewhere, will recognize the intensity of feeling and attachment on the other side of the divide and will be inspired to try to understand it more fully.
Table 4: Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Green</th>
<th>Gov</th>
<th>Scep</th>
<th>born in VT</th>
<th>Generations in VT</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Income Rank</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Hunter</th>
<th>Motor Rec</th>
<th>Non motor Rec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carleton Mel</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>6+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Real Estate Broker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>75,000-99,999</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingsbury Larry</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retired, (Teacher)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50,000-74,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Morton Angela</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Daniels Michael</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Landscape maint.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50,000-74,999</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metcalfe Jeff</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Timber) Yard Manager</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50,000-74,999</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson Mickey</td>
<td>0.426</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Director of non profit</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>75,000-99,999</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flannery James</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30,000-49,999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tremblay Elaine</td>
<td>-0.286</td>
<td>0.598</td>
<td>(yes)</td>
<td>(multiple)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(caretaking, cleaning)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30,000-49,999</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Moore Alvin</td>
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Sources


Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets. (n.d. [2004]). *Genetic engineering co-existence*.


Appendix 1: Interview Guide  (Phase 1 interviews)

Interview Questions

Biography
Residence
   Can you describe where you live now?
   places you have lived before?
   Which have you liked best?  What aspects do you appreciate most?

Employment
   What kinds of work are you doing and have you done in the past?

Personal Experience of Benefits Derived from Land
In what ways has the land been important to you either in your work life or your private life?  (I’m calling these “benefits”)
Have there been changes that have affected your use or enjoyment of the land (positive or negative?)
   Who or what has brought about these changes?
   Have there been any key events with a particularly strong impact?
How have you responded?  What have you done as a result of these changes?  Have you managed to hold onto the benefits you value?
   (if involved in an organized group) – What is your opinion of the organization? How successful were they?

Conflicts
What conflicts are you aware of?  Which groups do you see as being at odds with each other?  What land uses seem incompatible?
What is at the root of the conflicts?  (Are the conflicts the result of bigger changes in Vermont?)
Who has been successful at realizing their goals?  Have some groups been (unfairly) shut out?  What explains that?

What land uses/ benefits need to be carefully safeguarded?

Resolving conflict
What efforts have been made to resolve the conflicts?  What is your opinion of these efforts?  How should land use conflicts be resolved – (what principles should guide efforts at resolution?)

What is your ideal vision of Vermont’s landscape and the uses that we put it to for the future?

Do you have anything else that you’d like to add?

Do you have suggestions for other participants?
Appendix 2: Selected Participant responses plotted against Green Governance (Factor 1) and Government Sceptic (Factor 2) averages
Appendix 3: Green Governance and Government Sceptic factor rankings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement Ranked by Factor 1 Preference</th>
<th>Factor 1 score</th>
<th>Factor 2 score</th>
<th>Factor 1 Priorities</th>
<th>Factor 2 Priorities</th>
<th>Factor 1 Weighted St. Dev.</th>
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<td>Our society needs to put more effort</td>
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<td>into fostering a sense of personal</td>
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<td>responsibility toward the land.</td>
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<td>viability</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Our working landscape will disappear</td>
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<td>unless we devote more attention to</td>
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<td>maintaining a viable agricultural and</td>
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<td>forest products economy.</td>
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<td>protect threatened and endangered</td>
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<td>species.</td>
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<td>keep people from polluting the land</td>
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<td>and damaging our natural resources.</td>
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<td>cluster</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
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<td>Vermont should encourage people to</td>
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<td>build houses in already developed</td>
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<td>areas, not in farm fields or working</td>
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<td>forests.</td>
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<td>prime agricultural soils by keeping</td>
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<td>development off of them.</td>
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<td>quality, nutrition and the environment</td>
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<td>reputation by holding industry to strict</td>
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<td>sv sm frms</td>
<td>It is important to protect small farms and prevent them from being swallowed up by larger farms.</td>
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<td>open acc</td>
<td>Vermont's long-standing tradition of open access to land needs to be preserved.</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<td>chng lstyil</td>
<td>If we hope to save Vermont's environment, we need to make major changes to our lifestyles and way of doing business.</td>
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<td>-0.3</td>
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<td>biodiv</td>
<td>Protecting biodiversity is just as important as protecting people's livelihoods.</td>
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<td>fin asset</td>
<td>Too many people treat land as a financial asset and are quick to subdivide and sell off lots.</td>
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<td>ID cons</td>
<td>State government should systematically identify high priority areas that will be conservation targets.</td>
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<td>-1.4</td>
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<td>The best way to figure out how to keep the land healthy is to listen to people who work the land everyday.</td>
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<td>The government should support the agriculture and forest products industries to ensure they survive in the globally competitive market.</td>
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<td>wild ecos</td>
<td>Wilderness areas are necessary because even carefully managed timber operations have some negative impact on the ecosystem.</td>
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<td>Hunting is important to keeping the population of wildlife under control.</td>
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<td>more wild</td>
<td>We need more wilderness areas to provide necessary habitat for animals and plants that don't thrive in managed forests.</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
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<td>ag expl</td>
<td>The agriculture system in the U.S. forces farmers to over-exploit the soil and their animals in order to survive.</td>
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<td>-0.6</td>
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<td>tmb prod</td>
<td>Since Vermont is a place where timber can be sustainably produced, it's our responsibility to use a significant part of our woodlands for timber production.</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
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<td>Score 3</td>
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<td>post</td>
<td>If a landowner has had a bad experience with people who use their land, it is entirely appropriate that they post their land in response.</td>
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<td>brd regs</td>
<td>Poor land management by a few irresponsible people leads the state to enact burdensome regulations.</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
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<td>OOS ig</td>
<td>Too many out-of-staters don't understand the rural economy or way of life and propose land use controls that are inappropriate for Vermont.</td>
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<td>free mkt ld</td>
<td>Since we have a free market in land, we have to accept that wealthy out-of-staters will continue to move here and that land prices will go up.</td>
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<td>bureauc</td>
<td>State government is too bureaucratic and inefficient to effectively oversee land use.</td>
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<td>hold up</td>
<td>Vermont law makes it too easy for one person to hold up development projects by appealing permits.</td>
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<td>Vermont should get out of low-end commodity production (i.e. shipping logs or bulk milk) and focus on value-added products.</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Score 1</td>
<td>Score 2</td>
<td>Score 3</td>
<td>Score 4</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>2m regs</td>
<td>Vermont has too many regulations that unreasonably restrict what you can do with your land.</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>unf subd</td>
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<td>Environmentalists are never satisfied – they always push for more protection by whatever means they can.</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
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<td>Vermont has gotten too far ahead of the surrounding states with its environmental regulations.</td>
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<td>hard PPR</td>
<td>The owner of a piece of land has the right to do whatever he or she wants with it, even if that means degrading that land's resources for future use.</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statements Ranked by Factor 2 Preference</td>
<td>Factor 1 score</td>
<td>Factor 2 score</td>
<td>Factor 1 Priorities</td>
<td>Factor 2 Priorities</td>
<td>Factor 2 weighted st. dev.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>unf r biz</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>hold up</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont law makes it too easy for one person to hold up development projects by appealing permits.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listen</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The best way to figure out how to keep the land healthy is to listen to people who work the land everyday.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m regs</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hunting</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting is important to keeping the population of wildlife under control.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OOS ig</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many out-of-statess don't understand the rural economy or way of life and propose land use controls that are inappropriate for Vermont.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>bureauc</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State government is too bureaucratic and inefficient to effectively oversee land use.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>respnsity</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our society needs to put more effort into fostering a sense of personal responsibility toward the land.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tmb prod</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since Vermont is a place where timber can be sustainably produced, it's our responsibility to use a significant part of our woodlands for timber production.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open acc</td>
<td>Vermont’s long-standing tradition of open access to land needs to be preserved.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viab WL</td>
<td>Our working landscape will disappear unless we devote more attention to maintaining a viable agricultural and forest products economy.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brd regs</td>
<td>Poor land management by a few irresponsible people leads the state to enact burdensome regulations.</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
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<td>VLT price</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
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<td>supp WL</td>
<td>The government should support the agriculture and forest products industries to ensure they survive in the globally competitive market.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>If a landowner has had a bad experience with people who use their land, it is entirely appropriate that they post their land in response.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sv ag soils</td>
<td>It is important to protect Vermont’s prime agricultural soils by keeping development off of them.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
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<td>land trusts</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free mkt ld</td>
<td>Since we have a free market in land, we have to accept that wealthy out-of-staters will continue to move here and that land prices will go up.</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Std Dev</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>food prod</td>
<td>In the U.S.'s food production system, quality, nutrition and the environment are treated as less important than the economic bottom line.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>VT cater</td>
<td>Vermont caters to wealthy out-of-staters and doesn't consider the needs of working class locals.</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cluster</td>
<td>Vermont should encourage people to build houses in already developed areas, not in farm fields or working forests.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>env regs</td>
<td>We need environmental regulations to keep people from polluting the land and damaging our natural resources.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourism</td>
<td>Vermont puts too much emphasis on tourism.</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
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<td>fin asset</td>
<td>Too many people treat land as a financial asset and are quick to subdivide and sell off lots.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>end sps</td>
<td>We need to make a special effort to protect threatened and endangered species.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sv sm frms</td>
<td>It is important to protect small farms and prevent them from being swallowed up by larger farms.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>green rep</td>
<td>We need to protect Vermont's green reputation by holding industry to strict environmental standards.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chng lfstyl</td>
<td>If we hope to save Vermont's environment, we need to make major changes to our lifestyles and way of doing business.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ag expl</td>
<td>The agriculture system in the U.S. forces farmers to over-exploit the soil and their animals in order to survive.</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Score</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>low end</td>
<td>Vermont should get out of low-end commodity production (i.e. shipping logs or bulk milk) and focus on value-added products.</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biodiv</td>
<td>Protecting biodiversity is just as important as protecting people's livelihoods.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecolos</td>
<td>Ecologists have an important role to play in helping determine what uses are appropriate for different pieces of land.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>wild ecos</td>
<td>Wilderness areas are necessary because even carefully managed timber operations have some negative impact on the ecosystem.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID cons</td>
<td>State government should systematically identify high priority areas that will be conservation targets.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hostile</td>
<td>Locals are too hostile to newcomers and new ideas.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more wild</td>
<td>We need more wilderness areas to provide necessary habitat for animals and plants that don't thrive in managed forests.</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>