Towards critical resilience: political and social dimensions of work in community projects

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Abstract

Resilience is essential to reconfiguring livelihoods in a destabilising biosphere, but without due consideration of social inequalities, discourses of resilience can perpetuate neoliberal agendas. This article highlights the potential to rewrite prevailing governmental configurations of resilience, those designed to encourage voluntary and community responses to structural problems. We analyse the political and social dimensions of work (both paid and non-paid) in Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) community projects in Scotland. Against a background of economic austerity and inequality, we explore the life trajectories and narratives of participants, highlighting discourses associated with their engagement and participation. The paper illustrates that contexts of austerity and inequality lead to composite forms of engagement that range from career enhancement and increased work flexibility to compassionate action, the enactment of subsistence activities and collective empowerment. However, how work—voluntary vs paid, full-time vs part-time—was distributed within the projects re-enacted existing inequalities. Within this context we explore how work in community projects can prefigure work in critically resilient economies.

Keywords: critical resilience, low-carbon community, environmental sustainability, austerity, Scotland

Résumé

La résilience est essentielle à la reconfiguration des moyens d'existence durables dans une biosphère perturbée, mais si on n'accorde pas aux inégalités sociales l'attention qui leur est due, les discours de résilience risquent de perpétuer les objectifs et les stratégies néolibérales. Cet article montre qu'il est possible de repenser les configurations gouvernementales prédominantes de la résilience, dont la conception vise à encourager une réponse aux problèmes structurels par l'action bénévole et celle de la communauté locale. Nous analysons les dimensions politiques et sociales du travail (rémunéré ou non) dans les projets menés par et pour la communauté locale dans le cadre du Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) – ou Fonds défi climat – en Écosse. Sur fond d'austérité économique et d'inégalités, nous explorons les trajectoires de vie et les récits des membres de ces projets, en mettant en exergue les discours relatifs à leur engagement et à leur participation. Ce texte démontre que les contextes d'austérité et d'inégalités conduisent à des formes d'engagement composites, lesquelles couvrent aussi bien la progression de carrière et l'augmentation de la flexibilité du travail que l'action compassionnelle, la mise en œuvre d'activités de subsistance et l'*empowerment* collectif. Or, dans ces projets, la division du travail – bénévole ou rémunéré, à temps plein ou partiel – reproduit les inégalités existantes. C'est à cet égard que nous explorons la façon dont les projets portés par la communauté locale peuvent préfigurer la conception du travail dans des économies marquées par une forme de résilience critique.

Mots-clés : résilience critique, communautés locales à faible émission de carbone, durabilité environnementale, austérité, Écosse

Introduction

The global North may have entered a prolonged recession, and while it is hard to judge whether this is a permanent state, signs of structural crisis are written on the wall (Kallis, Kerschner and Martinez-Alier, 2012). The accelerating unravelling of the biosphere (Rockström, Steffen, Noone et al., 2009) and planetary climatic systems (IPCC, 2018) call for a rapid decarbonisation of the global economy. The scale and speed at which this shift needs to happen require systemic changes beyond the growth paradigm (United Nations, 2019) and towards livelihoods which do not depend on fossil fuels and resource-intensive consumption. Commentators have pointed to the centrality of labour and work in this debate, and the need for alternative conceptions and enactments of work for any hope of achieving social and environmental justice (Cock, 2014). A reworking of the agenda entails going beyond simply the slowing of

growth capitalism, and towards adequate means by which to enact just, egalitarian and ecologically informed livelihood practices (Brownhill, Turner and Kaara, 2019). At the same time, growing economic inequality and marginalisation hinders participation in sustainable transformation due to the unfairly distributed costs of adaptation (Perkins, 2019).

Governmental attempts to pass agency and responsibility for major global challenges to citizens and local communities[1] are symptomatic of neoliberal agendas (MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014; Brownhill, Turner and Kaara, 2019), paradoxically turning "community" into a mechanism that serves to individualise rather than collectivise. Following the financial crisis of 2008, the politics of austerity in Scotland and the UK brought unprecedented public and local government spending cuts, declining living standards and growing inequality (Clarke and Newman, 2012; MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014). A succession of localisation measures[2] have deflected responsibility for care, welfare, and environmental sustainability to individuals and communities governed at a distance (Rose and Miller, 2010; Taylor Aiken, 2015). The focus of the Scottish government's policies, including the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF), has been on pro-environmental consumption practices at the local level under the banner of behaviour change (Brook Lyndhurst and Ecometrica, 2011). Critiques posit that these initiatives are framed within top-down neoliberal "citizen-consumer" logics, emphasising consumer choice and individual environmental responsibilities (Barr, Gilg and Shaw, 2011; Webb, 2012). Such arguments illustrate the limitations of policy making in a neoliberal market economy and instil urgency for ecologically sound practices beyond matters of individual responsibility, choice and consumption. Important here is due consideration of the divergent social and material contexts in which citizens and communities live and work, and the issues and barriers they face.

Drawing on an ethnographic study of CFF projects in Scotland, this paper explores the manner in which these projects are governed and enacted. We problematise the nuanced interplay between what we term "individual resilience" and "critical resilience" in the context of community project work. Individual resilience is vulnerable to being exploited by neoliberal modes of rule: those that rely upon self-governing and "empowered" individuals who accept their share of responsibility for mitigating climate change and improving their communities, but without explicitly framing it in relation to unequal material and social circumstances. Critical resilience is framed as working

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1. The notion of community, as mobilized by British and Scottish institutions, tends to be equated with the local in french. To be competent, it must at least take the form of a de facto association and in some cases have legal status. See in particular Taylor Aiken Gerald, 2015.
2. These measures are part of a localist approach of the British government, especially in line with the Localism Act 2011, which endorses the transfer of certain state prerogatives to individuals and local communities (note by the French translator).

against current systemic structures considered to be disempowering, and aims to foster the emergence of radically new structures. In relation to critical resilience, we discuss Tim Ingold's (2000) notion of patterns of tasks and subsistence activities that are differentiated from wage labour and may include food production (Stern, 2000) and other activities that are not readily subsumed by market rationalities. Individual and critical resilience are not mutually exclusive, however: while we use these terms in this paper to differentiate between practices that are compatible with neoliberal economic modes and those who are not, they are best seen as context-dependent tendencies that are constantly in flux, and one may contain the seeds of the other. In the interests of dealienation, collective working, and environmental justice, we explore the working lives of those working in and beyond "top-down" discourses that seek to individualise environmental and economic problems. In doing so we highlight the potential for "critical resilience" from the ground up (Barca, 2019; Brownhill, Turner and Kaara, 2019). We ask, how are CCF projects governed and enacted? What can we learn from community workers' relations to their work in low carbon community projects, and how can this help us understand the impact of inequalities upon work in community projects? How can community projects become more critically resilient?

This paper is organised as follows. First, we discuss the concept of resilience and the manner in which it has been deployed to frame work in the context of community projects in Scotland. We discuss the subject of the "good community worker" in Scottish social and environmental policy, before turning to the CCF case studies at hand. Thereafter, we discuss the characteristics of resilience identified in our analysis. We conclude by discussing the pressing need (and possibility) to shift attention away from individual and community adaptive capacity, in order to meaningfully address the inequalities that foreshadow work in climate change mitigation.

Towards critically resilient work and livelihoods

In order to better understand the contributions community projects can make to climate change mitigation and adaptation among their participants, we consider qualitative elements of the work that make up these projects. While climate change mitigation remains a legal requirement for the Scottish government, there is now an acceptance that Scotland's and the planet's climate has already changed: a climate emergency is unfolding and adaptation measures are needed (Scottish government, 2019).

The concept of resilience has been adopted to describe the future-proofing of societies, communities and individuals in the face of the profound, far-reaching

changes required to transition economies away from fossil fuels. Derivative of ecology and systems theory, resilience refers to how natural systems may react to shocks and become adaptable in order to continue functioning. Yet, the concept is now readily applied, somewhat ubiquitously, to the social domain (Folke, Carpenter, Elmqvist et al., 2002; Gunderson, 2003).

> "Resilience is often associated with diversity—of species, of human opportunity, and of economic options—that maintains and encourages both adaptation and learning." (Folke, Carpenter, Elmqvist et al., 2002, p. 438)

Discourses of resilience propagated via government policy, think tanks and environmental agencies have been influential in framing community work, community volunteering and community activism (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013; Monforte, 2019). Arguments point to the "top-down" governmental function of resilience, invariably placing the onus on individuals, communities and places to become more able to cope in the face of major global catastrophes (Felli and Castree, 2012; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013; MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014). In combination with the harnessing of "community" (Taylor Aiken, 2015), then, resilience aims to animate the agency of local people to modify "everyday" practices largely within the current neoliberal framework, suggesting that human well-being is best advanced by empowering individual freedoms, skills and behaviours in alignment with market rationalities (MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014; Brown, 2015). An emphasis on reconfiguring behaviours, skills and capabilities, distracts attention away from structural inequalities and the critical role of politics in the current crisis. More profoundly, such discourse attempts to decouple the politics of climate change from any wider contestation of social and environmental relations (Featherstone, 2013).

Applying the concept of resilience to social systems without due analysis of its sociopolitical effects leaves it vulnerable to exploitation (O'Malley, 2010). A globalised capitalist economy centred on wealth accumulation requires spaces that are periodically reinvented to meet changing demands. Resilience to crises, then, is framed primarily within the capitalist system and its accelerating crises, where particular groups are unjustly burdened with the responsibility for the costs of adaptation (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013, p. 254). While the existence of the most vulnerable people and communities are acknowledged through such discourse, attention is drawn away from inequalities by addressing all social actors as having the same interests and aspirations (Felli and Castree, 2012). Resilience framed as diversity without addressing inequality reinforces established social structures by apolitically inferring coping strategies against a threatening and externalised other (O'Malley, 2010).

Contestations of neoliberal discourses and its hegemonic effects have heightened as political accountability decreases, inequality grows, and the climate emergency unfolds (Featherstone, 2013; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013; Monforte, 2019). Alternative subjectivities and collective practices are being explored, even if they are imagined and experienced ambivalently. For example, Danny MacKinnon and Kate D. Derickson (2013) foregrounded a politics of resourcefulness, through which injustice, the uneven distribution of material resources, and an inability to access the mechanisms of social transformation could be challenged. Communities thus have latent capacity to engage in democratic dialogue and develop ways to meaningfully contest existing power relations. The reproduction of unequal social relations through top-down ideologically delineated forms of community and resilience are thus potentially averted. For MacKinnon and Derickson (2013), resourcefulness means that autonomy is not a condition independent of wider social relations, but rather a commitment to continually contest power relations and institutions that attempt to define a given locality.

Relatedly, Pierre Monforte (2019) describes "critical resilience" as the animation of critical political subjectivities among volunteers in the field of poverty alleviation. He examines how volunteers framed their engagement in opposition to the politics of austerity. Critical resilience disrupts individual acts of compassion framed through neoliberal discourses intended "to make volunteers feel better about themselves" (Monforte, 2019, p. 3), and instead defines resilience as ongoing processes of collective, rather than individual, empowerment. Critical resilience calls upon alternative and previous collective working practices that may contradict neoliberal rationalities (DeVerteuil and Golubchikov, 2016): where people are far less inclined to relate to work in terms of individualised logics of investment, career, and lifestyle choice (Read, 2009), instead experiencing collective subsistence through localised production and consumption processes. Critical resilience is an agentic and active precursor to a more conspicuous form of social transformation (DeVerteuil and Golubchikov, 2016). Resilience can also be social: groups can use or build social networks, collective learning, and leadership (Monforte, 2019, p. 4).

One aspect of critical resilience we look at in this paper is the subversion of prevailing economic rationalities concerning work (in particular through wage labour) and the emergence of different values and economic practices. Ingold proposes that "tasks are the constitutive acts of dwelling" (Ingold, 2000, p. 195). Similar to Ingold's notion of dwelling activities, subsistence activities such as food production, tool making, repair works or upcycling (making craft items from waste products) are differentiated from wage labour, although they may be dependent on and constrained by wage

labour (Stern, 2000). Subsistence labour shares some characteristics with domestic labour: both are characterised by tasks to navigate everyday life, may not be remunerated, and may not be captured by labour productivity metrics. Subsistence labour also dealienates production and consumption processes in the sense that they are localised and may be performed by the same individuals (for example, food grown and consumed locally instead of bought in a supermarket; items fixed or upcycled instead of bought new). Beyond that, subsistence activities that are performed in the collective context of community projects for climate change mitigation extend tasks that may normally be performed domestically to the communal realm, and thereby can contribute to critical resilience.

Nevertheless, the interplay of individualised acts of compassion and more critical forms of resilience can produce ambivalent experiences in voluntary participation. In Monforte's study (2019), for example, volunteers mixed discourses on social justice with more conservative discourses that blamed the victims of poverty for their own predicament. In the following sections, we consider how community projects frame and constitute work both within and outside of prevailing neoliberal frameworks. We note how subsistence activities can foster collective processes of empowerment and critical resilience. The concept of prefiguration, used in anarchist strategy and thought, is helpful here. Prefigurative practices seek to "embed envisioned future modes" (Ince, 2012, p. 1646) in the present. The notion of prefiguration implies the fundamental acknowledgement that transformative processes are necessarily incomplete (Ince, 2012).

In the following section, we discuss the policy context and the manner in which CCF projects are officially organised and envisioned in Scotland, before turning to the ethnographic cases at hand.

The Climate Challenge Fund and the "good community worker"

Communities have played a key role in Scottish environmental and social policy in recent years (Taylor Aiken, 2014; Creamer, 2015), and especially since the Scottish National Party (SNP) entered a minority government in 2007, then supported by the Scottish Green Party. The CCF emerged in the run-up to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, which set an ambitious interim target of 42% reduction of CO_2 equivalent by 2020 from baseline figures, and 80% by 2050 (Scottish government, 2009). The Scottish government differs from the UK government in its emphasis that communities should be able to choose their own level of empowerment, which will vary between communities (Rolfe, 2018, p. 8). The UK government's approach to localisation assumes that

communities are stronger without direct state intervention. In contrast, the Scottish government affirms collective power and partnerships between communities and government, extending rights of communities to control their own land and assets through the Community Empowerment Act 2015 (Rolfe, 2018). However, the effects of austerity, especially cuts to local government budgets, even out the differences between UK Localism and Scottish Community Empowerment. Although the latter acknowledges inequalities, they cannot be tackled effectively under the restrictions imposed by austerity policies, often leading to empowering the powerful and disempowering the powerless (Rolfe, 2018).

A further example of enacted neoliberal policy is the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)[3], the Scottish government's relative measurement tool to identify levels of deprivation across small areas in Scotland. The SIMD measures indicators such as pupil performance, travel times to medical facilities, crime and unemployment to show "where Scotland's most deprived areas are, so organisations know where their work can have the biggest impact" (Scottish government, 2016, p. 2). Nevertheless, by failing to problematise the root causes of poverty and inequality, and by placing the onus on "committed organisations and individuals" (ibid., p. 1) to improve places, the Scottish government frames structural economic impacts of UK-wide austerity politics as local issues that can be fixed by local organisations. Although this is inherently problematic, we have used SIMD deciles in this paper as a marker of identifying symptoms of deprivation in order to highlight demographic differences between community organisations.

Since the launch of the CCF, "over 1,100 projects across all 32 local authorities have been awarded CCF grants. Total CCF funding since 2008 has exceeded £104 million" (Keep Scotland Beautiful, 2019). To be eligible, community groups need to be Scottish-based, legally constituted, not-for-profit community groups. By specifically defining in the funding criteria, and ultimately rewarding, communities of place, a particular notion of community was, at least partially, constructed (Taylor Aiken, 2015). Community groups bid for CCF funding to support projects that commit to measurable carbon emission reduction, but the programme acknowledged wider goals of building

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3. The notion of deprivation belongs to the vocabulary of social action in certain English-speaking countries, including Great Britain. Conceptualised in part by the British sociologist Peter Townsend in the 1960s, it goes beyond the hitherto prevalent notion of poverty, as well as that of precariousness. Translated as "défavorisation" in Quebec (INSPQ), it is struggling to establish itself in the lexicon of the French-speaking social sciences. The notions of relative deprivation and relative frustration, for relative deprivation, are also in use in other disciplinary streams. See Leloup Xavier, Apparicio Philippe, Séguin Anne-Marie, "Le concept de *relative deprivation* : survol des définitions et des tentatives de mesure appliquées à l'urbain", INRS/Research Paper, 2005; Di Natale Isabelle, "Réformes et politiques éducatives au Royaume-Uni entre 1997 et 2010 : quel système d'enseignement secondaire pour le Royaume-Uni depuis la promulgation de l'"Education Reform Act" en 1988 ?", PhD thesis, Sorbonne Paris Cité University, 2019, p. 426 and Leydier Gilles, "Entre libéralisme, social-démocratie et intégration européenne : un modèle écossais ?", Observatoire de la société britannique, n° 1, 2006 (TN).

resilience, capacity, awareness and additional social and environmental benefits, such as teaching skills to grow food locally (Brook Lyndhurst and Ecometrica, 2011). Through the CCF, then, the Scottish government has governed indirectly through community groups (Taylor Aiken, 2015), a process described as "responsibilisation" (Rolfe, 2018, p. 581), or what Rose and Miller (2010, p. 271) term "governing at a distance".

Taylor Aiken (2015) describes how, against a backdrop of increasing social and economic neoliberalisation, community projects exemplify a form of governmentality that encourages environmental behaviours as individualised responsibilities and consumer orientated freedoms. Consent to low carbon living is governed and internalised through community projects. By delineating freedom of choice for citizens as consumers able to negotiate environmental challenges, community operates as a technology of government power (Taylor Aiken, 2015, p. 772). By conceiving of those involved in community projects as subjects of responsibility, and by turning public goals for carbon reduction into private norms of choice and discretion, a distance is created between formal institutions and local actors.

While our analysis by and large supports the description of community projects as "innovative niches" (Seyfang and Smith, 2007), the premise that such a view deprives community projects "of their social and spatial particularity" (Taylor Aiken, 2014, p. 767) was addressed at the research design stage. The three projects we investigate differed from each other demographically: community group 1 (CG1) was situated in a deprived urban community (SIMD decile 1), community group 2 (CG2) operated in a relatively affluent small-town community (SIMD decile 7) and the surrounding region, and community group 3 (CG3) was active in a so-called new town in the vicinity of a city (SIMD decile 3).

CG1 was founded in 2002 and works in an area situated within the most upper decile of deprivation in a city with a population of 92,820. In addition to its team of around 12 core staff and 15 sessional staff,[4] CG1 had around 80 volunteers at the time of research. CG1 focused on creating safe play spaces and social meeting spaces for young people and adults. CG1's environmental activities were intensified through the CCF-funded project Grow Green, and included regular weekly activities such as a swap shop in a previously unused shop, an Environment Group to study sustainability issues and Connecting Generations allotment meet-ups for older adults and young people. Two community gardens and a wildlife garden were developed with the help of volunteers, organised through committees that included partner organisations such as schools and health centres.

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4. Sessional workers are workers who are paid on an assignment basis, for whom it is not mandatory to establish a contract.

CG2 was a community organisation founded in 2007 in a town of 8,486 residents (2011 census) which contained no data zones in the 20% most deprived in the surrounding region of Scotland, and two data zones within the 10% least deprived in Scotland (SIMD 2012). At the time of research, CG2 had seven part-time or sessional staff members, and in addition to its board of directors an unspecified number of volunteers and associates. CG2 existed to prepare people in the town and surrounding region for future social and environmental challenges by promoting a local transition to a reduced dependence on fossil fuels and increased sustainability and resilience through a Local Resilience Action Plan. CG2 also produced maps to rethink existing spaces along sustainable parameters, highlighting local walking and cycling routes. CG2 worked closely and synergistically with existing community groups with diverse purposes, such as a car-sharing club, the group managing the community-owned woodlands[5] and local businesses such as a community bakery. CG2 also started new initiatives such as a new food growing space, promoting cycling (for example, through a pop-up bicycle repair facility) and brought neighbours together in peer support groups to reduce their energy consumption and environmental impact at home.

CG3 was a development trust founded in 2010 in a new town of 74,400 (2011 census). Most of its data zones are found in the middle deciles in SIMD 2012. CG3's CCF-funded project was run entirely by a group of around twelve volunteers and some sporadic helpers. The project involved running a demonstration site for seed saving, an apiculture project, running annual seed exchange events, building gardens in schools around town and teaching food growing skills to college students.

All three community projects had received substantial CCF-funding (above £100,000). Their demographic characteristics reflected some of the inequalities present in communities across Scotland. This was not only echoed in differing local needs and priorities in relation to the types of project activities and methods of participant engagement, but also in relation to the work patterns of employees, sessional workers and volunteers. In all three community projects, climate change action consisted of a range of interlocking mitigation and adaptation practices which were constituted by "a range of discourses and meaning-making processes" (Russell, Greenaway, Carswell et al., 2013, p. 2).

The Scottish government conceives of work undertaken by community groups and the workers that constitute them as an unequivocally good remedy for social ills, whether tackling poverty and deprivation in areas identified by the SIMD, or cutting

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5. Community woodland groups are local collectives for the management of riparian forests for which they are responsible, either on a freehold, leasehold or user basis. They are most often de facto associations. For more information, see The Woodland Trust, Community ownership for woodland management and creation Research report, June 2011 (ed.).

carbon emissions on the ground with the help of CCF-funding. Given that the idealisation of "community" is inherently problematic, so is the notion of the "good worker" (MacKenzie and Forde, 2009). We found that project workers' motivations for and enactment of work were far from homogenous. Shaped by the project workers' unequal social histories, individual and organisational interests interplayed with collective and visionary approaches towards social change, which we will discuss further below. It is through work (both paid and unpaid) that participants engaged with the projects on a regular basis. Narratives that emerged in the case studies in relation to work include workers' abilities to choose or reject precarious circumstances; from hobbies and volunteering to paid employment. In these narratives, we distinguish between individual resilience, which is vulnerable to being exploited by neoliberal modes of rule, and "critical resilience" (MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013; Monforte, 2019).

Research methods adopted included participant observation over eleven months, during which time one autho, Svenja Meyerricks, joined the groups as a part-time volunteer. For example, she took part in activities such as gardening, bees keeping, raised bed construction, running a weekly swap shop and attending meetings and events. Overall, she conducted 51 semi-structured interviews with volunteers, staff members, and close associates across all three projects. Semi-structured qualitative interviewing was chosen as a research method well suited to "access the 'world' in terms of those people being researched" (Stroh, 2000, p. 197). Our emphasis on individual interviews may have particularly highlighted the individual resilience of project participants, while the evidence of critical resilience was primarily taken from field notes.

Adopting qualitative methods had the advantage of generating in-depth place-based data, and was not intended to be representative (Burton, 2000) across other CCF projects. The resulting narratives are necessarily subjective and incomplete. Our analysis adopted an iterative approach involving a dialogue between empirical material and theory to investigate how participants related to their work, others, and the self. In order to protect the anonymity of participants, we use pseudonyms and have avoided mentioning specific information that could make them easily identifiable.

An interplay between individual and critical resilience

In CG1, situated in a deprived urban community, some staff members reported improvements to their own learning and competence. For example, Siobhan, a paid staff member, appreciated that the entry requirements to work in recycling awareness and upcycling were flexible enough to enable her to work in an area she felt passionate

about, and to gain the necessary "human capital" (Read, 2009) to develop a career in environmental sustainability after a period of unemployment in Ireland.

"I came over [to Scotland] two years ago with no environmental experience on my CV, [and] through volunteering, I'm in exactly the position I would want to be in right now." (Siobhan, project worker)

CCF projects offered entry opportunities into green jobs for people who, like Siobhan, wanted to align their career with their passion for environmental causes.

In CG2, located in a more affluent area, flexibility, choice and personal fulfilment were at the core of staff members' motivations for wanting to work for the organisation. All project workers were employed part-time through job shares or as sessional workers.

"I was looking to stop working five days a week… And at that point [CG2] applied for the CCF-funding, so I applied for the role and did some other work through the summer to help pay the rent." (Tim, part-time worker)

Project workers stated that they chose not to work full-time so they could pursue other work interests and commitments—for example, running a pottery business, a consultancy for participatory project design, or parenting. Some had also migrated to the area, but did not share experiences of hardship reported in other community groups. For example, Bob and John had both migrated to Scotland from England. Their wives had well-paid full-time jobs, enabling them to work less and more flexibly and to take on the majority of childcare duties.

"I haven't worked full-time very much in my life [laughs]. Which is good that I've been able to do that, or have the choice to do it." (Bob, part-time worker)

Grace, also part of CG2, stated that local employment provided through the CCF enriched her quality of life: as a single mother, the flexible nature of her part-time job was supportive of her parenting responsibilities and enabled her to be involved in a local community organisation. Given that she had to split her time between paid work and parenting, she would not have been able to dedicate time to the organisation on a voluntary basis. Part-time, meaningful community-based work led to increased individual resilience for workers, as expressed by Grace, Bob, John and Tim in relation to increased flexibility, job satisfaction and work-life balance.

In contrast, the degree of flexibility and choice enjoyed by CG2 staff members was not available to project workers in other contexts. Douglas, a sessional worker in CG1, was from a similarly deprived background to the young people he worked with,

and overcame significant social barriers to obtain a college degree and a full-time position at the local authority. Douglas wanted to change jobs and applied for the community gardener position at CG1. When offered the job, he did not accept it due to the financial pressure he experienced as the only wage earner within his family unit. He kept his full-time job at the local authority instead.

In CG3, Stuart, an engineer with a full-time position, felt that relatively low third sector salaries were not a realistic option for him and, in his words, "laughed at" common CCF project worker salaries.

> "I have two kids and a mortgage, and all this (he pointed to the project site) is a hobby." (Stewart, volunteer-leader)

Both Douglas and Stewart, who were both highly skilled and from self-reported working-class backgrounds, did not see third sector community jobs as realistic long-term career options. Siobhan saw the project work as an opportunity for a career move in a new place, after a period of unemployment. In CG2, on the other hand, project workers' favourable personal circumstances allowed them to choose part-time and precarious work situations.

Douglas and Stuart were motivated to participate in community projects because they aligned with their interests. Douglas joined CG1 as a sessional worker in order to run a youth project he felt passionate about. Stuart was crucial in designing the CCF project for CG3, and remained in a position of leadership in relation to the other volunteers and funders without taking on a paid position. Stewart led on aspects of CG3's CCF project that were to improve critical resilience in his community by adjusting to future challenges through subsistence activities, such as keeping bees on site, and endeavouring to build up a seed saving network through seed swaps. CG3 continued to be run solely on a voluntary basis, and was at the time the only CCF-funded community group who opted not to hire any staff members.

> "I don't want a staff or to pay anybody. [...] Cause it's a voluntary group. The trouble is, I see too many projects in what I call the 'voluntary sector', and there's hardly any volunteers in them. All the work's done by staff that are paid. [...] That's also another reason why things fall on their arse if the funding dries up. [...] Our projects won't fall on their arse." (Stewart, volunteer-leader)

Critical resilience is necessarily located beyond ill-suited labour markets that are inadequate for the sustainability of environmental work in the long-term. Around four months after the interview cited above, Stewart's work situation changed and he was no longer able to dedicate much time to the project. His absence soon became noticeable; the remaining volunteers struggled to maintain the seed saving and apiculture

projects without him. In CG1, Douglas's project finished when the funding ran out, and he ceased to work for the organisation.

These stories of project workers highlight the precarious nature of environmental community work, which offers opportunities to some and presents barriers to others. There is a clear tension between the Scottish government's ideal of projects conducted by "good communities" to improve social and environmental ills, and the negotiation of individual career paths that limit individual abilities to engage with and even retreat from these projects.

At CG1, paid staff members were guided by volunteers' preferences, but ultimately organised the activities on offer. Staff members sought to improve the individual resilience of volunteers in the face of the wider challenges they experienced from living in an area with symptoms of multiple deprivation. Volunteering was described like a form of occupational therapy that addressed the symptoms of multiple deprivation in individuals, by helping them to feel more confident.

> "[Volunteers have spent] their whole life maybe excluded from society, always told that they're not good enough, and they're not gonna succeed, they're not gonna get a job even though they're being told at the same time, 'You have to get a job!'—even though there's no jobs. So they might come to us being really shy and not kind of daring to talk much necessarily, or not thinking that their ideas have much value, or they're worth kind of putting out. And it takes a lot of time and kind of patience really to build up that confidence with people." (Sam, project co-ordinator)

For Lynn, another staff member, community work was framed as a means to achieve individual empowerment in others, described as a process of responsibilisation through the accumulation of transferable skills:

> "The whole principle behind community work is that you support people to become empowered, and for them to gain the skills. So it's not about doing things for people, it's about helping them with the experience to do things themselves." (Lynn, staff member)

CG1 volunteers also reported improvements in personal confidence, and enjoying communal work (at times intergenerational) as an alternative to watching television or excessively drinking alcohol. Volunteers also reported that being part of a group gave them more agency.

> "You are part of something bigger than yourself, totally... As a person you don't have much power, but with a group of people, there's a difference, I find, together." (Noemi, volunteer)

Examples of communal activities were growing food in the organisation's community gardens and allotment, running a swap shop to enable residents to swap clothes and accessories (in an area where second-hand clothes were associated with a stigma), and upcycling.

However, although taking part in activities that improved personal well-being were clearly beneficial to the lives of volunteers and made improvements to the local community, there was a sense that aiming to make a difference in the personal lives of individuals was the most that could be achieved. More far-ranging systemic shifts towards critical resilience appeared to be out of reach. This was most obviously felt in what Douglas experienced of the local authority's budget cuts and increasingly limited resources.

> "[In the local authority,] we don't really have the resources or the facilities to address the issues that need to be addressed. [CG1 are filling a] gap between … the local authority and the community at ground level." (Douglas, sessional worker)

The impact of austerity policies was felt most harshly here, with the CCF project attempting to counteract the worst effects of the politics of austerity upon local people's lives.

Douglas's youth project in CG1 taught its participants a range of practical and conservation-related skills as well as a D.I.Y. work ethic. Douglas wanted to instil a sense of autonomy and individual competence in the young people he worked with. Young people needed to learn how to look after themselves, and gaining practical conservation-related skills and knowledge gave them "skills to be an adult". Although Douglas aligned this with a form of individual empowerment, crucially, this involved the formation of subsistence activities for some of the young people he worked with, such as the task of staking and caring for a tree.

> "[They're] learning why they're daein' that, and learning that you've got to care for these things—to nurture them. And that was a side to their nature that they'd never seen before; it was all about destruction, shooting things, competing. It's a slower way of life and it's maybe no quite as consumptive a way of life as the aspirational society." (Douglas)

In all three projects, critical resilience was emerging when project workers challenged disempowering systemic structures and sought to collectively nurture the emergence of subsistence activities. For example, in CG1, the notion of volunteering was not universally regarded as "good". Young people might be subjected to peer pressure against doing unpaid work.

"Unless you're getting paid for it, what's the point in daein' it? Well, you *are* getting paid: you're creating a better environment for yourself, you're geein' yourself some-where nicer to live. And it's about trying to explain that change in values to them." (Douglas)

CG2 worked most strategically towards local job creation. At the time of field-work, CG2 supported a Community Bakery, and the community buy-out of an organic wholefoods shop. The intention was that these local shops could source their produce from agribusinesses in the surrounding region, thus cutting out supermarkets in the hope of stimulating a wider demand for localised services. However, the organisation was made up mostly of middle-class participants whose values sometimes clashed with those of the traditionally more working-class part of the community. For example, CG2's plans to erect a community wind turbine were shelved due to a lack of local support.

In CG1, individual staff members and volunteers held visions for improving local individual resilience and in turn the community's critical resilience, but these visions were described as distant dreams. For example, Douglas had a vision for community projects that would upskill especially young people into new and sustainable employ-ment pathways in local food production, and by building new growing spaces in back courts and teaching residents to grow their own food:

"We could have finance coming into us by creating these jobs. We could also take un-employed, unskilled young people, train them in joinery, woodwork, horticulture and develop them onwards and upwards." (Douglas)

Discussion

Our findings suggest that working in community projects improved the individ-ual resilience of paid and unpaid project participants in different ways. In the three different community groups, those workers and volunteers who had the highest level of professional expertise and qualifications were enabled or restrained by their social positioning around deprivation and affluence, which influenced their individual free-dom to choose precarious third sector jobs with relatively low pay. Paid workers in CG2 and CG1 experienced qualitative gains through the flexible or local nature of their jobs (Bob and John in CG2), as well as individualised material gains where they could turn their passions and interests into careers (Siobhan in CG1).

Participants from poor or working-class backgrounds (Douglas in CG1 and Stewart in CG3), who had relatively stable careers, did not participate in the projects

for their professional development. Instead, they positioned themselves critically in relation to a wider neoliberal agenda and promoted subsistence activities in their communities, despite the significant barriers to developing critical resilience in these communities.

Volunteers in CG1 experienced a boost in personal confidence and well-being, strengthening their individual resilience. By participating in subsistence activities as part of a group, volunteers also experienced the power of collective endeavours that prefigured (Ince, 2012) modes of critical resilience. However, evidence of the "responsibilisation" (Rolfe, 2018) of volunteers, in terms of the inculcation of individual behaviours, carries the implication that residents of multiply deprived communities are expected, unfairly, to develop the capacity to adapt. This view renders the underlying structural injustices of neoliberal austerity politics invisible. It is important here to differentiate between adult and young volunteers: "responsibilising" young people takes the shape of pastoral mentoring, which, at their stage, can have a lasting positive impact on their development into adults. Yet "responsibilising" adult citizens in the most deprived communities, where residents have limited agency to modify their behaviours, is a case of misplaced paternalism. In a wider context of social inequality, the CCF's aim of cutting carbon emissions leaves us with difficult questions regarding environmental justice. These findings illustrate the necessity to place climate and environmental mitigation within a broader frame of unequal social and material relations (Featherstone, 2013). Failing to do so risks placing the onus of responsibility for resilience upon those least able to enact it.

CG3's refusal to adopt formal structures beyond the legally required minimum reflected Taylor Aiken's findings that "indicators of growing into the mainstream are often outright rejected by many volunteers who constitute niche communities" (2015, p. 767). The project's aims to establish a seed saving network and keep bees showed signs of resourcefulness in MacKinnon and Derickson view (2013), by enabling its participants to be more autonomous in their food security. This was coupled with a perceived need to move beyond what were viewed as restrictive and limiting labour markets and funding arrangements. However, the project's capacity to establish practices of critical resilience suffered because individual group members' personal circumstances limited their ability to sustain project activities.

In contrast, in the affluently situated CG2, project workers displayed a relatively high degree of individual resilience expressed in high mobility and access to personal assets and resources. They were also able to strategically stimulate local businesses and work towards connecting with agribusinesses in the region. The high levels of individual resilience present in CG2 make it tempting to conclude that herein lies the key

to what makes a "good community worker". However, the kinds of meaningful, flexible and part-time work arrangements enjoyed by the CG2's staff members do not provide long-term job security insofar as the project's existence relies solely on grant funding (Creamer, 2015). They also are not perceived to be widely accessible, as examples from CG1 and CG3 suggest. This might create perceptions and conditions of exclusivity, which might hamper CG2's goal of creating more green, sustainable work opportunities for people in the local region.

In all three projects, critical resilience, following Monforte (2019), was latent or unfulfilled. For example, volunteers learned to grow their own food, learned about seed saving, looked after beehives and swapped clothes. Young people learned about practical conservation and gained valuable new skills. Through these tasks, the projects promoted subsistence activities. However, while these subsistence activities contained the seeds of local autonomy through increased self-sufficiency, they were too small in scale and lacked the coherence to make a meaningful contribution to people's livelihoods.

Given the profound inequalities in Scottish society, which were evident in the three community groups studied, the principle of equity is paramount in seeking to improve critical resilience across all communities. Equity requires the means for everyone to sustain their livelihoods in meaningful and dignified ways, to foster well-being and meet basic needs. Communities like CG1 continue to be affected by widespread unemployment and underemployment, which presents a barrier to long-term participation in climate change mitigation and adaptation. While the Scottish government acknowledges that well-being needs to be an important goal of the economy (Scottish government, 2020), a focus on equity and dignity in sustaining livelihoods is crucial to enacting critically resilient working practices in Scottish communities. A Green New Deal, degrowth and ecofeminist economics (Bauhardt, 2014) are possible pathways towards meeting these aims. We follow the precautionary principle (Read and O'Riordan, 2017) by arguing that ecological limits presented by climate change and resource depletion call for a degrowth approach. Instead of aiming to raise the living standards of the poorest part of the Scottish populace to that of the wealthiest minority, the emphasis must be on sharing and redistributing available resources and types of work (including waged, domestic and subsistence labour) to meet basic needs for all. Within a "degrowth" framework (Kallis, Kerschner and Martinez-Alier, 2012), economic participation may be very localised. Douglas's (CG1) vision of autonomous community projects selling the fruits of their labour aligns with such an alternative form of economic participation. We suggest that subsistence activities become better acknowledged and supported as a part of economic participation that can help sustain livelihoods, both as part of and beyond the monetary economy.

Conclusion

The analysis of the interplay between individual and critical resilience in CCF projects in Scotland illustrates the impact of a context of austerity upon the participation of workers and volunteers in different social and material positions. We have shown that inequality and ill-aligned labour markets impede collective ecological livelihood practices in the long-term. Moving beyond ambivalent experiences of volunteering and paid work (Monforte, 2019) in climate change mitigation and adaptation requires a dramatic shift away from neoliberal modes of rule that equate environmental sustainability with the responsibilisation of individuals and communities through "behavioural change" (Brook Lyndhurst and Ecometrica, 2011). The notion of critical resilience is pertinent to moving beyond prefigurative (Ince, 2012) community projects and towards a just transition to a degrowth economy within environmental limits. The rapidly accelerating degradation of the biosphere (Rockström, Steffen, Noone et al., 2009; IPCC, 2018; United Nations, 2019) renders this transition as a pressing imperative. Shifting from imagined and localised forms of critical resilience to a more widespread and long-term enactment of them requires that "empowerment" is aligned with collectives that are able to subvert, and not inadvertently reproduce, existing structural inequalities (Barca, 2019). This seems especially pertinent given that communities subject to deprivation have ostensibly a more immediate "need" to become "resilient", yet without the apparent social and material support to do so. Yet the same existing structural inequalities that give rise to untenable social deprivation also enable resource-intensive affluence that is ecologically untenable. Tackling the root causes of these inequalities requires deep structural shifts such as redistributing work and resources more equally. More equal societies tend to not just offer a better quality of life, but foster the social responsibility, co-operation and public spiritedness that are a prerequisite for transitioning to low-carbon societies (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Our paper demonstrates that, contrary to the effects of neoliberal rule, our attention must shift towards producing a "critically resilient" socioenvironmental context and away from an explicit focus on nurturing a given individual's or community's "adaptive capacity" (Felli and Castree, 2012, p. 2). The examples of critical resilience we have alluded to can perhaps be envisioned as seeds of well-being and degrowth economies (Kallis, Kerschner and Martinez-Alier, 2012). Yet for such seeds to grow, the state cannot be considered distant to the population (Felli and Castree, 2012; Rose and Miller, 2010). Meaningful democratic participation must be realised through and against the state in order to address the inequalities that precede the local enactment of climate change mitigation. This, we argue, must involve broadening our conceptions of

work and the individualising confines of neoliberal modes of appropriation, and to-wards collective and interwoven tasks (Ingold, 2000) that sustain livelihoods in ways that support equity, critical resilience and, ultimately, a living planet.

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