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# **CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE MEANING OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATION**

**RIMA PATRICIA HUSSEIN**

**PhD**

**2009**

**CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE  
MEANING OF CORPORATE SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY IN A THIRD SECTOR  
ORGANISATION**

RIMA HUSSEIN

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of the requirements of the  
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School

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## Thesis Abstract

How can Corporate Social Responsibility best be understood, what is its range of application and what insights can culture provide when considering the responsibilities of a third sector organisation? This thesis addresses these questions through ethnographic enquiry conducted in a third sector organization (Groundwork Northumberland).

Challenging the rigid conventions which restrict the relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility to the private sector it demonstrates both the contest and construction of meaning and frame of reference of Corporate Social Responsibility by employees in Groundwork Northumberland. All eight members of the organization have participated by engaging in semi-structured interviews (with me), keeping a research diary (individually) and participating in a focus group (with colleagues). These engagements have generated multiple accounts which demonstrate the tensions and dilemmas that mark their work, particularly in meeting expectations of stakeholders. Through these engagements the self-understandings of participants are shown to have been challenged and changed through the research process. Equally the 'concept' of Corporate Social Responsibility has been shown to be similarly changeable while remaining unintelligible outside a context of practice in which at least some self-understandings are shared.

Martin's framework has been considered as a means to represent the culture of the organisation. The third perspective highlighting ambiguity, paradox and contradiction seems to best represent the accounts of the research engagement with GN. The presence of tension and difference as well as a sense of disorder suggest a place for debate, discussion and plurivocality, a place in which there is indecision and the possibility of decision (Derrida). It can therefore be suggested that a responsible organization and person will be more marked by fragmentation than integration or differentiation, and that fragmentation provides conditions which Derrida discusses through the terms 'aporia' and 'undecidability'.

These accounts exhibit the radical undecidability of Derrida's ethical situation in all its lived messiness. The culture of an organization which has engaged in such meaning construction is shown to be marked by the acknowledgment of the responsibility of meaning-making and is aporetic. The contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate the responsibilities inherent to an engagement with the precariousness of meaning exhibited by Corporate Social Responsibility in an organization which has chosen such engagement.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

## **Chapter One      Introduction**

This chapter aims to introduce the reader to the background of this thesis and set the scene for the following chapters. The first section provides an insight into the initial research interest and my motivation for conducting the research project. The second section introduces the case organisation and the wider research context of the third sector is outlined in the third section. The aims and objectives of this project are provided in the final section.

### **1.1      Background Information**

I first became interested in studying ethics when undertaking undergraduate research. My undergraduate dissertation focused on the topical issue of the ethics of door-to-door selling, which had generated reams of media publicity focusing particularly on the energy sector in 2001. The ethnographic project explored this topic through the context of a new door-to-door sales agent's experience while working for a national energy company. The dissertation explored the cultural phenomena of the organisation, the tension between the agent's personal ethical approach and organisational working practices, and the bigger picture of media publicity and regulatory anxiety over unethical selling practices. The story followed the agent's journey from recruitment to eventual resignation and was entitled 'The life and death of a salesman'.

Following the completion of the undergraduate degree I worked for an environmental regeneration charity, Greening for Growth, for nine months. Greening for Growth worked in deprived areas in South East Northumberland, with the purpose of regenerating communities that had been affected by the decline of the mining industry. During this time the organization was undergoing a change of ownership from a public sector, council-led project to becoming part of a national company with charitable status, Groundwork UK. The context of operating in the regeneration area was immensely interesting as contrary to my, perhaps rather naïve, expectations of the third sector: power, politics, competition, tensions, and conflict were fiercely present in my daily experience as the office manager.

The local community played a huge part in the work of this organization with consultation and participation being important to the continued success of the

projects. Although very crucial, this took time away from the employees' craft, which was frustrating for them, while tensions were certainly apparent between the employees of the organisation and the wider organisational stakeholders. This experience intrigued me and led me to choose Groundwork Northumberland as my research organisation (for further details on single case choice refer to Chapter Three).

## **1.2 The Context**

The initial research proposal of this work focused on corporate social responsibility in the private sector, as it was considered that the named allegiance to corporations restricted its application to the private sector, something reflected in the literature base. In this literature is an infamous dichotomy between responsibility to shareholders, as espoused by Milton Friedman, and a stakeholder approach, as supported by R Edward Freeman.

Jones (2007) has questioned this distinction by deconstructing Friedman's best known statement asserting that the only responsibility corporations have is to their shareholders. Deconstruction of Friedman's contention suggests that his point may have been interpreted too narrowly. An earlier book which provides context to the famous statement enables a re-reading to make possible a very different meaning.

While the Friedman/Freeman debate continues to frame much discussion, the literature demonstrates that corporations do principally aim to maximize shareholder value (see Chapter Three). Against this context, advocates of Corporate Social Responsibility aim to increase awareness among corporations of duties other than the fiduciary. This then extends responsibility to other groups which are impacted on by the corporation's activities; namely its stakeholders (for discussion of stakeholders see Chapter Three).

However, following Jones's lead we may say that in relation to the application or relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility, drawing the line between private sector and other sectors may also be open for critique.

The third sector consists of non-governmental organizations which are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organizations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals.

(Cabinet Office, 2006)

The third sector, in particular, is growing increasingly competitive and this competition extends to private sector organizations<sup>1</sup>, 'companies are increasingly promoting their own foundations, selling ethical products or running social campaigns' (Jordan, Third Sector Daily Online, 8 July 2008), and charities are 'finding it difficult to compete' (ibid). There are debates taking place in the sector focusing on governance in charities (Walker, Third Sector Daily Online, 3 Oct 2008), accountability (Ainsworth, Third Sector Daily Online, 9 July 2008), transparency (Filou, Third Sector Daily Online, 7 July 2008) and pay. I had worked in this sector for a year prior to commencing my research and considered this an important context in which to explore Corporate Social Responsibility. Although charities' main aim is to benefit the public good in a specific context, there is no less pressure from the public or government, particularly for accountability and transparency (Charity Commission, 2008), justification of the use of public funds and stakeholder engagement<sup>2</sup> (Maier, Third Sector Daily Online, 30 July 2008).

Funding issues are prevalent in the third sector with high competition over available funds. This is apparent in Groundwork Northumberland. However, Groundwork Trusts receive an initial amount of government funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government; providing financial security in the initial set-up years of a new trust. In two years this money decreases gradually and eventually the Trust operates as a small business. The status of a trust is not clear-cut. The Executive Director of Groundwork Northumberland has suggested that there is a certain amount of confusion as to whether the Groundwork Trusts are labelled as a charity, business or community/voluntary organization. In fact he put this conundrum forward at a

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<sup>1</sup> According to a report by the Public Administration Select Committee titled 'Public Services and the Third Sector: Rhetoric and Reality' (2008) there is no proof that charities are better at delivering public service contracts than providers from other sectors.

<sup>2</sup> There are calls for a sector ombudsman in order for the public to have a point of contact for complaints, as it has been suggested that complaints procedures at individual charities are unsatisfactory leaving 'volunteers, donors, service users and members of the public' without representation.

regional directors' meeting, with no consensus reached (Interview data – 12.07.07).

In relation to these issues existing in third sector organisations, working in related areas of environmental regeneration, are known to be wary of Groundwork Trusts being established in their geographical areas, for further discussion see Chapter Four. This reaction seems to be due to their acceptance/reliance on government funding, providing the perception of financial advantage and the possibility of a competitor operating on unequal terms. This is less apparent for Groundwork Northumberland, because prior to becoming part of the Groundwork Federation, Greening for Growth had built relationships and partnerships with many organisations in Northumberland.

Rising from the increasingly competitive sector are drives for charities to be more business-like. What then might Corporate Social Responsibility look like in the third sector? Would an account of Corporate Social Responsibility specific to the sector be useful?

### **1.3 Setting the Scene, Organizational History**

Groundwork Northumberland started life as Greening for Growth, set up by Northumberland County Council in 2000 following a report investigating regeneration of the coal-mining communities with the purpose of environmental regeneration in South East Northumberland's post-coalmining communities. Greening for Growth transferred to the Groundwork network, part of a national umbrella company Groundwork UK, in 2005.

I joined Groundwork Northumberland in December 2004 when the organization was going through upheaval and changing ownership structures from Northumberland County Council to charitable status as a trust in Groundwork UK. I was brought in on a consultancy contract as the office manager had left and no new employees were allowed to be taken on during the twelve months of the TUPE<sup>3</sup> transfer process. My position had no rights in comparison to the established employees, and it soon became apparent that the previous office

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<sup>3</sup> TUPE – The Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations which safeguard employments terms and conditions when employees are transferred from one organisation to another.

manager had left under strained circumstances, taking most of the knowledge of how to run the administrative side with him.

The transfer dragged on for months until finally just before I left (around May 2005) the organization became a trust. Through the negotiation of the transfer the director had not been offered a definite place in the new trust, he was told that he would need to interview for the post. He decided to leave instead and the director of a competing charity in the regeneration sector was put in charge of leadership, although staff felt concerned at the possible clash of interests. Then a regional director of Groundwork UK took charge, visiting the premises often and maintaining day-to-day contact. One of the few incidents that stand out at the time was a situation where a member of staff who had been off due to health issues had used the van belonging to the organization. The regional manager dealt with the case severely and quickly, she made numerous phone calls to higher management and reacted angrily, the staff member was given a written warning. The employees had suffered from the instability, lack of leadership, and frustration that came with continual delays and lack of information in the transfer from one organization to another, as well as changes to their rights and pay. There was evident conflict in variety of directions.

#### **1.4 Groundwork UK**

Groundwork UK is made up of a federation of trusts, with regional offices that provide strategic support to each trust in developing activities, partnerships, and new programme areas (Source: Groundwork UK website). Groundwork UK's strategic plan (2006-9) provides an explicit statement on vision, purpose and values, as detailed below.

Groundwork's vision is of:

[...] a society made up of sustainable communities which are vibrant, healthy and safe, which respect the local and global environment and where individuals and enterprise prosper.

Their purpose as an organisation is to 'build sustainable communities in areas of need through joint environmental action'.

Groundwork UK outlines their core values as:

- Equality and diversity – valuing difference and treating everybody with respect.
- Innovation and learning – always looking for new and better ways of working.
- Subsidiarity – making decisions at a level as close as possible to the communities we serve.
- Integrity and professionalism – maintaining personal and professional standards.
- Partnership – working with others to deliver maximum benefits.
- Sustainability – respecting nature’s limits and the needs of future generations.

Each trust has charitable status, is a company limited by guarantee and while receiving support from Groundwork UK, retains freedom of financial independence and operates as a small business.

Groundwork UK are increasingly measuring the success of their work according to five headline outcomes:

- Better local environments
  - People more satisfied with the places where they live
  - People feeling more empowered to engage in local decision-making
  - People and organisations better equipped to connect with economic opportunity
  - People behaving in socially and environmentally more positive ways.
- (Groundwork UK Website)

#### **1.4.1 Groundwork Northumberland**

Groundwork Northumberland now has ten employees and operates predominantly in South East Northumberland on projects under six headings: Land, Community, Education, Youth, Business, and Employment. These themes are standardised throughout the Groundwork network, although each trust places different emphasis due to own established strengths and staff.

Groundwork Northumberland has built up resources predominantly in the Land theme, with Community and Education growing, while Youth and Business remain a long-term objective once the trust is more established.

Groundwork Northumberland works with a wide range of organizations across the themes that are established (land) and growing (community and education). The following list and diagram are designed to give an indication of the relationships the organization has with different groups of people:

## **Funders**

Central government funding from Groundwork UK, Grant bodies e.g. the National Lottery and local authorities.

## **Partners**

Local authorities are considered partners, as well as funders (some core funding comes from them), they provide tenders for projects and are delivery partners and provide maintenance for some completed projects. Charity partners include those in the environmental sector and the wider third sector e.g. voluntary organizations.

## **Board of trustees**

The board consists of local councillors, representatives of partner organizations, and members of voluntary organizations in the region.

## **Local communities**

Referred to as 'end users' or 'customers' (Interview data), local communities as a wider term encompasses project delivery in a variety of settings e.g. housing estates, schools. A significant amount of Groundwork Northumberland's work is based on delivering projects which impact on local communities. This entails engagement and consultation with those communities, which can be difficult due to resource issues.

## **Landowners**

These stakeholders impact on Groundwork Northumberland's work through ownership of land where projects are based allowing them ongoing influence over the types of projects that are able to be delivered.

## **Employees**

Groundwork Northumberland employs ten people in a variety of roles.

Employee welfare is crucial and a current issue in the way the Trust works (see Appendix One for further discussion).



A recent report entitled 'Making change happen, making change last' a Groundwork UK impact report 2007/8 discusses stakeholder surveys, in the following excerpt:

We use a number of structured questionnaires and interviews to ask our stakeholders what they think about our services and how they can be improved.

Our stakeholders include:

- The people and organisations involved in our local projects
- Key partners, such as local authorities and other public agencies that fund our services and help us to deliver our projects and programmes
- Our own staff.

(Groundwork UK Impact Report, 2007/8)

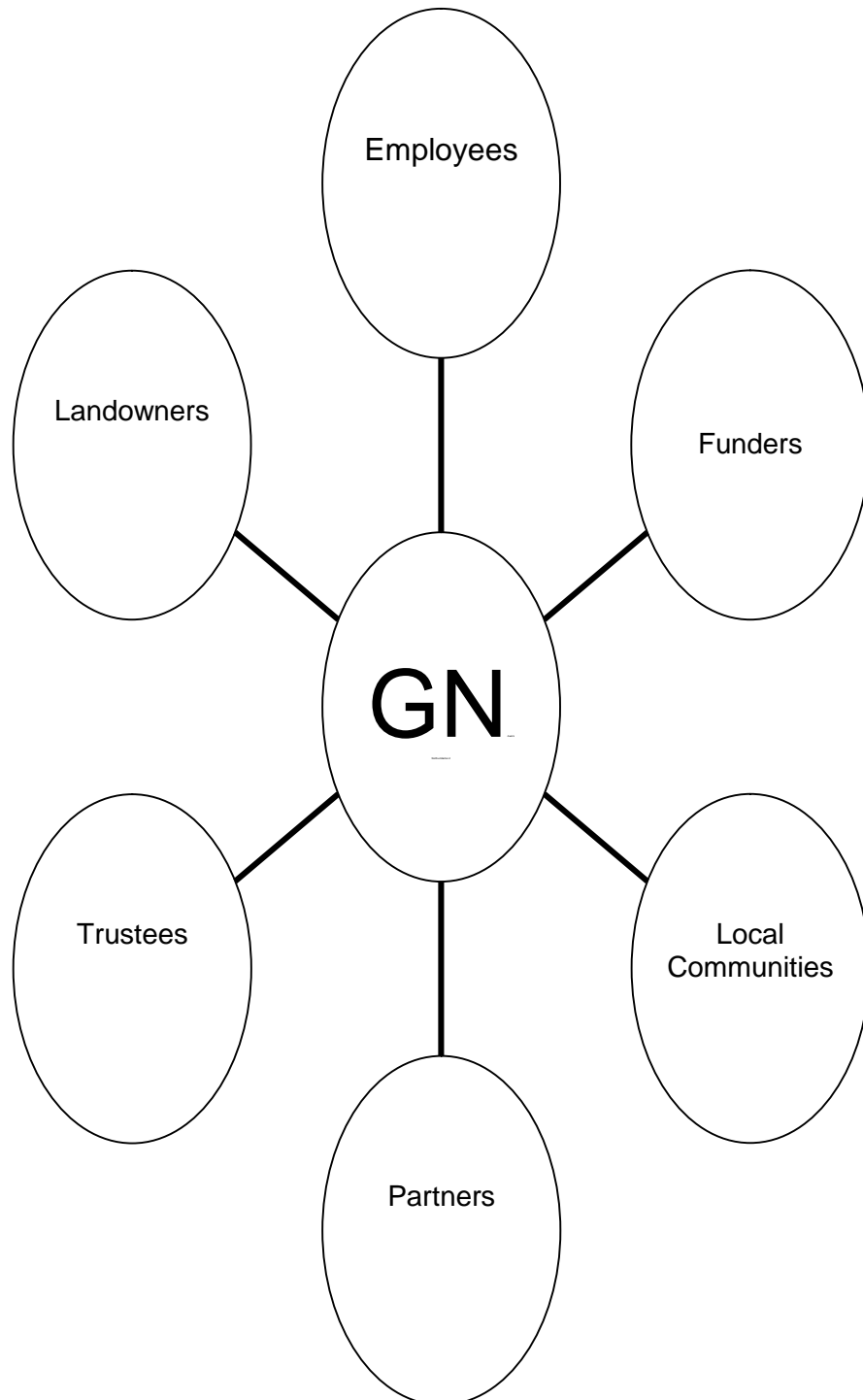
In this stakeholder excerpt there are no specific mentions of the communities in which Groundwork delivers projects, key partners and funders are specifically mentioned, but the term used that may represent communities is vague; 'people'.

Prior to participating in this research Groundwork Northumberland have been involved in a Beta Plus consultation process, see Appendix Four for Beta Plus documentation. All Groundwork Trusts are:

...encouraged to undertake a rigorous annual self-assessment, using the business excellence through action (beta plus) process. Areas identified for improvement are then incorporated into business plans. During 2007/08, 75% of all our business units undertook an assessment based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Business Excellence Model.

(Groundwork UK Impact Report, 2007/8)

**Figure 1.1 Stakeholder Map of Groundwork Northumberland**



## **1.5 Aims and Objectives**

This project aims to explore the culturally specific meaning(s) and practices of 'Corporate Social Responsibility' in a small scale third sector organization.

### **Research Questions**

Alongside this overarching aim, I will be asking; What meaning may Corporate Social Responsibility have within a third sector setting? How can a third sector organization engage in exploring what Corporate Social Responsibility means to them? Could Corporate Social Responsibility have a place in the organization, and the wider context of the third sector? What insights can culture provide when considering the responsibilities of a third sector organisation?

#### **1.5.1 Objectives**

- To critically review literature in the areas of Practice based ethics, Corporate social responsibility and Culture.
- To develop a methodology appropriate to the research question.
- To collect and analyze data which enables the research questions (described in the Aims and Objectives [1.5] section above) to be answered.
- To make an original contribution to knowledge through exploring the combination of theories in a unique context.
- To support research participants in reflecting on the impact that may occur through participating in this research.

## **1.6 Original Contribution**

There has been little empirical work to date exploring Corporate Social Responsibility in the third sector, Seitanidi (2005:67) notes the changes taking place in the third sector particularly the moves towards 'professionalisation' and more business like operations. This context then provides a unique setting in which to explore Corporate Social Responsibility and in doing so this work seeks to offer a response to the call from Jones (2007b) for engagement with deconstruction and Derrida.

This thesis proceeds to a discussion of Methodology in Chapter Two, followed by the Literature Review in Chapter Three, the Analysis, Discussion and Findings in Chapter Four, and Conclusions in Chapter Five.

## **Chapter Two      Methodology**

This chapter discusses the choices, steps, decisions and overall approach taken in this research project. The aim is to illuminate the unfolding research journey. This includes its underlying epistemology, case study methodology, use of multiple methods of data collection and approach to data analysis.

The aim, then, is to set the context, introduce me and give a picture of the iterative nature of the research. The writing style aims to flow; giving a reflexive account of the twists and turns in the journey in accordance with the auto-ethnographic commitments of the research project as a whole, bringing together the many aspects important to the methodology of this research, in order to provide a holistic perspective.

This chapter begins by explaining the research context and choice of organization with justification of a single case study. The next section continues by elaborating on the focus on meaning in this work and the approaches adopted; ethnographic inquiry, ethnographic representation and data collection methods. The data collection methods discussed are: semi-structured interviews, research diaries, focus groups, archival data and reflexivity. The chapter concludes with a discussion of evaluative criteria in qualitative work, ethical issues, and changes that would be made if the study was to be replicated.

### **2.1      Choice of Research Organisation**

I began by conducting initial interviews in Groundwork Northumberland (for an introduction to the case organisation, see Chapter One). From the outset it was clear that the concept of corporate social responsibility was of great interest to them. Their umbrella organisation; Groundwork UK (for explanation of the relationship between Groundwork UK and Groundwork Northumberland, see Chapter One) had already begun to consider the place of corporate social responsibility in their operations.

This was evidenced by conversations taking place at strategic levels. For instance, a meeting of Executive Directors which was described to me by

Groundwork Northumberland's Executive Director culminated in a discussion around the question: Are we a charity, community/voluntary organisation or a company? There a unanimous decision was not reached.

There had also been a proposal in 2007, to arrange a Groundwork UK led organisational-wide volunteer day in order to do 'something about corporate social responsibility' (Executive Director, personal correspondence). This ended up being unsuccessful, as the move was rejected by the Executive Directors of the individual trusts. The idea was rejected with the view that any time volunteered should benefit the individual trust's geographic area. Groundwork Northumberland's Executive Director expressed that he saw this as protectionism, but nonetheless agreed with the action. This situation provides a glimpse of the desire to engage with corporate social responsibility, but also the competing interests and obstacles to overcome in doing so.

While the literature focuses on corporations, here was a third sector organization engaging with the concept and grappling with their views on the positioning of corporate social responsibility and what relevance, if any, this had to them. The pilot data led me to start asking questions; the most important of which was; what meaning could/does corporate social responsibility have in relation to a third sector organization?

The choice of research organization was then made in order to explore corporate social responsibility in a unique context, access was sought to continue researching Groundwork Northumberland and was granted.

## **2.2 Single Case Study**

A single case study is explored in order to comprehend the dynamics of an individual case (Eisenhardt, 2002; Stake, 1995). The use of case study in research strategy as outlined by Hartley (2004) focuses on exploration of phenomena in real life-context and is an empirical inquiry in which the borders between the phenomenon and context are not clearly visible (Yin, 2003). Since the main aim of this research is exploration of the meaning making of the

individuals in an organization, the surrounding backdrop or context is inseparable from the specific phenomenon being researched.

The use of case study is not merely a data collection method but in fact a strategy which impacts on design, data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003). The use of Groundwork Northumberland as a single case study draws on purposive sampling, which is defined as the choice of a particular context in which to explore a phenomenon (Saunders et al, 2007) and could also be considered a revelatory case; an individual case where a researcher gains access to a previously undocumented scenario (Yin, 2003).

A single case was chosen for in-depth exploration to understand the engagement with corporate social responsibility rather than aiming for breadth. The single case inquiry is established as a justifiable focus when exploring a unique context (Yin, 2003) and can be generalized theoretically rather than empirically (Yin, 1983), as 'getting very close to managers in one organization is a means of generalizing about processes managers get involved in and about basic organizational activities' (Watson, 1994:7). This approach 'gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of study' (Stake, 2000:444).

Though a unique context, a single case study approach may inform us of experiences of other similar organizations (Robson, 2002; Yin, 2003, p. 41). In this case Groundwork Northumberland's experiences may be illuminating to other Groundwork trusts and useful to organizations with similar issues prevalent in the third sector. For example, issues which I have experienced when working in the organization: funding, tensions in managing resources and engaging with stakeholders.

### **2.3 Focus on Meaning**

The epistemological position that I hold within this work is broadly poststructuralist, with assumptions of language, meaning and subjectivity (Weedon, 1987). Language constitutes 'a critical site for the contestation of

meaning... through a whole range of discourses' (Letts, Date Unknown: 624) in subjectivity that is a 'site of disunity and conflict' (Weedon, 1987:21). This is not to state that 'meaning is indeterminate', a misplaced criticism that Jones (2007:518) outlines is often connected with deconstruction, but that there is space for multiple meanings to be experienced individually, that may be discussed, questioned and negotiated in a collective setting (for example, the focus groups in this project). Symbolic interactionism is adopted as the theoretical perspective (see 2.4), connecting to the poststructuralist assumptions with interests in language, meaning and subjectivity. Deconstruction is considered later in this chapter as a path for exploring the tensions and dilemmas in the practice of GN interviewees. As I analysed the research data I became drawn towards the power relations that GN struggle with in their work and the responses to the 'devalued other' (Martin, 1990); in this case both the local community and Gary (office manager). It is through this move that I have reconsidered my epistemological position and am drawn to a poststructuralist position. This poststructuralist approach also ties into my own personal history, as the daughter of a Palestinian refugee I have had a sustained interest in marginalised people/communities and the tensions and conflict in their contexts.

This research is searching for meaning not truth (Watson, 1994). There are no claims of 'truth' in this work which draws on the belief that reality is socially constructed, subjective, changeable and open to multiple interpretations (Saunders et al, 2007). This approach is 'deliberately non-scientific and non-positivistic' (Denzin, 1983:131), and holds that:

1. The positivist assumption that only research evidenced through quantitative, observed, scientific conditions was legitimate and that any expression of 'subjectivity, intentionality and meaning' were disqualified, is rejected.
2. Positivist work 'seeks causal explanations' from a detached perspective which do not aid the 'understanding of directly lived experience'.
3. The search for causality and 'whys' are substituted by 'how's'.



4. Positivistic conceptual frameworks utilize theoretical and analytical foundations that stand detached from a world of interacting beings thereby separating 'human reality from the scientist's scheme of analysis.'

My perspective in this project holds that there are multiple realities, and hence multiple perspectives on the meaning of corporate social responsibility. This includes many different places and possibilities for it in the organization. These different realities are given meaning and constructed through interaction which takes place in a social context.

Qualitative methods support the processual nature of this research and allow space for the chaotic, messy, rich detail that is present in the voices of the participants, opposing views, voiced agreement and differing hierarchical levels. The use of qualitative methods allows for multiple accounts and voices by exploring the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. The methods used to enable this are; interviews, research diaries, focus group, auto-ethnography and reflexivity.

### **2.3.1 Meaning making**

Symbolic meaning is 'open' and 'ambiguous' due to the possibility of multiple meanings and the complexity of outsider/insider status, it is also important to consider the process through which the construction of meaning is taking place (Hatch, 2006:193) The perspective adopted acknowledges participants' active role in the 'construction of experience' (Smircich, 1983:161). Moreover, Smircich adds that it is the process through which experience is *negotiated* and *interpreted* that is central to understanding shared meanings in an organization. It is not shared meaning that is the focus of this work, rather the meanings that corporate social responsibility may hold for participants. Achieving shared meaning may be troublesome since all members engage in meaning making through their everyday experiences. Troublesome is rather an understated term, considering that managers can be perceived to be more controlled by the culture in an organization, or on the face of it, more inclined to 'toe the party line' than subordinates, who arguably have more freedom to hold dissenting views and show them (Hatch, 1997).

## **Symbols**

What are they? Where are they found? What meaning might they hold?

'Language, symbols, myths, stories and rituals' are of interest in this work not as artifacts 'but instead as generative processes that yield and shape meanings' (Smircich, 1983:353). This study draws on the perspectives articulated above which suggest meaning does not exist in the symbol rather it is 'constructed' through interaction, while, symbols may be shared, individual interpretations may differ, and therefore the possible 'multiple' and 'contradictory' meanings infuse richness and complexity in symbolism and culture (Hatch, 2006:194).

## **Sense-making**

Weick considers organizing to be like a piece of jazz, a little structure and creativity from members is what 'gives life to the culture', with 'ambiguity', 'uncertainty' and equivocality' at the core of life in organizations (Jovanovic & Wood, 2007:219). According to Weick (1989) members are continually organizing information and assigning meanings, hence, sensemaking is not a metaphor, and it is exactly what it says; to make sense.

To focus on sensemaking is to portray organizing as the experience of being thrown into an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question, "what's the story?"  
(Weick, 2005:410)

Weick (2005:17) proposes seven properties with which to understand the process of sensemaking; grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focussed on and by extracted cues, driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. Is it particularly the retrospective quality of sense making which may distinguish from meaning making? To discuss sense making is to observe continuing negotiation that 'becomes' when people reflect and make sense retrospectively of the circumstances which they have encountered (Weick, 1995).

Weick distinguishes four manners in which meaning is created, by:

Arguing (convincing each other through arguments);

Expecting (interaction between people on the basis of self-fulfilling prophecies)

Committing (carrying out activities aimed at creating involvement)

Manipulating (carrying out activities aimed at changing the situation in and outside the company to correspond with own insights/wishes)

'To remove ignorance, more information is required. To remove confusion, a different kind of information is needed, namely, the information that is constructed in face-to-face interaction that provides multiple cues'.

(ibid. p.99).

By marking the difference between ignorance and confusion, Weick acknowledges the ambiguity, uncertainty and equivocality at the core of organizational practice.

Organization theorists working in the symbolic-interpretative perspective assume subjective ontology and interpretive epistemology and focus on how organizational members make meaning and the role that meaning making plays in the workplace.

(Hatch, 2006:192)

Meaning 'exists through the subjective experience of various actors and groups of actors inside [...] the organization', and the meanings that are constructed and applied through this process (Crane, 1999:239).

Shared meaning is difficult to attain [...] although people do not share meaning, they do share experience. This shared experience may be made sensible in retrospect by equivalent meanings, but seldom by similar meanings.

(Weick, 1995:189)

## **2.4 Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism emphasises the importance of close engagement with research participants in order to gain understanding of the meanings they give to activities, and how they are 'constructed, negotiated and modified through processes of everyday social interaction' (Halfpenny, 2001:379).

Symbolic Interactionism originated in the earlier part of the last century through three American philosophers: Mead, Cooley and Dewey (Layder, 2006:71).

Their perspective rejected the orthodox psychological approach of the

behaviourists which adhered to the belief that people's behaviours were mechanical responses to external stimuli. Instead Mead et al paid particular attention to the subjectivity in people's lives, with the belief that 'behaviour is something that always develops through interaction' (Layder, 2006:73). Herbert Blumer, a student of Mead's, who coined the phrase 'symbolic interactionism', asserts that a focus on the importance of meaning is the fundamental feature of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969, cited in Layder, 2006). Blumer identifies three aspects to this: firstly, people act towards things according to the meanings they hold for these things; secondly, meaning arises out of interaction itself; and thirdly, meaning is handled in and through an interpretative process. The notion of meaning and its influence on social behaviour is pivotal to the symbolic interactionist.

Language is of crucial significance to symbolic interactionism as it 'creates the conditions for far more subtle and complex means of interaction' (Layder, 2006:76). This occurs through the ability to be aware of others' viewpoints and the internal communication we have with ourselves, which provides the opportunity to adjust our behaviour (Layder, 2006). It also offers a most important vehicle for the expression of meaning, and for understanding the meaning of others. Therefore, talking to participants, providing the opportunity for them to talk to each other as well as log their own thoughts separately provides a variety of ways through which the participants may express their own meanings and learn others' meanings and perhaps negotiate their own in the process (Halfpenny, 2001).

So the epistemological choices provide an '...ability to focus on actual practice in situ' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:832) while '...tak[ing] to the best of my ability the perspective of those studied' (Denzin, 1978:99). This approach feeds into the methodology i.e. the plan of research design that shapes the choice of methods used (Crotty, 2005) which consists of Ethnographic Inquiry and Case Study.

## 2.5 Ethnographic Inquiry

Ethnographic Inquiry focuses on uncovering meaning and perceptions of participants, aims to see things from the perspective of participants and views this against the backdrop of culture (Crotty, 2005).

Ethnography is a means by which to gain insight into the tacit assumptions and non-discursive material that are a part of meaning making just as much as text (Hansen, 2006), hereby providing the context in which the text, through interview, is generated and inseparable. As Hansen suggests:

Even if meanings are represented in language, this is not to say that language is the sole constituent of meaning. If our focus is on the construction of meaning in organisations we must attend to the construction site, or context.

(Hansen, 2006)

Hansen draws on the example of a play, which can only be wholly viewed by seeing the stage and hearing the actors speak, and draws the distinction between the lived experience and the mere reading of the script.

Traditionally ethnography is associated with anthropology wherein the researcher would spend periods of time 'living native' with unknown tribes in order to chronicle their patterns of behaviour and way of life. Modern ethnography fuses the 'everyday' thoughts of research participants with the academic body of knowledge, with particular consideration to meanings and the 'processes through which the members of particular worlds make those worlds meaningful to themselves and others' (Watson, 1994:7).<sup>4</sup>

Ethnography emphasises immersion in a context for a specific period of time. The idea of the researcher as an insider, yet remaining objective, is prevalent, with terms such as 'unveiling' used to describe the researcher's role. Hammersley (2002) writes as a conventional ethnographer, identifying strands of realism and relativism in ethnographic work. He could be identified as more

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<sup>4</sup> While Watson's definition aligns with my approach in this research, I have not spent the time required with research participants (exclusive of my previous employment) while conducting this project for my approach to be considered traditional ethnography.

of a 'realist' ethnographer, as he dismisses 'naïve' realism and relativism while arguing for a more subtle realism. From this subtle pragmatism he strongly critiques reflexive approaches as 'navel gazing'. There are as many approaches to ethnography as there are ethnographers, for others in the field reflexivity is a crucial ingredient of good ethnography. Neyland (2008:56) outlines three established approaches that are composed of varying ontological and epistemological positions: realist, narrative and reflexive ethnography. The approach of particular relevance to this work is reflexive ethnography which:

Engages in a thorough and detailed analysis of the ethnographer's attempts to make sense of the world while those being studied are making sense of the world.

Neyland (2008:56)

This is attempted by exposing my sense of the world in which I research, being aware of my own ways of doing so and then comparing this with the sense-making (Weick, 2002) of those being studied. Neyland (2008:56) acknowledges that it isn't easy to make the world apparent through the ethnography and that the reader's 'relationship' with the work is crucial as the reader makes 'sense of the world represented through the ethnography'.

### **Ethnographic Representation**

How I write up this research is important as this gives a representation of ethnography (Neyland, 2008). It is this word *representation* that influences the approach I have taken in this work and from which I am increasingly aware of issues in the validity, rhetoric and the politics of representation (Gergen and Gergen, 2002).

Representation is more than just *presenting on behalf of* it is also about relationships. The relationship between researcher and researched has been acknowledged as active, the interview is highlighted by Holstein and Gubrium (1997) and Denzin (2001) as an active process where meaning is co-constructed. There is a marked shift away from the detached researcher to a more 'humane' approach and heightened awareness of the 'politics of representation' (Gergen and Gergen, 2002: 13). The relationship between rhetor and reader, and researcher and audience is also integral.

In the social sciences 'realist forms of expression' have been long established, in other words, writing that identifies itself as a 'reflection of the real' (Gergen and Gergen, 2002:17). Gergen and Gergen (2002:13) continue by arguing that formal writing distances the reader from the writer and supports the notion of writer as 'the seer, the knower'. I identify with this, as it has been a struggle to find the means through which to represent the group of people that I am working with. I cannot seem to do it in a realist fashion, yet it is necessary to write in a sufficiently academic style for this thesis; balancing this is something I have been struggling with. In order to account for the representation of and relationship with others I have moved away from a traditional ethnography to an auto-ethnographic approach.

Auto-ethnography represents a significant expansion in both ethnographic form and relational potential. In using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar, the researcher is freed from the traditional conventions of writing. One's unique voicing complete with colloquialisms, reverberations from multiple relationship and emotional expressiveness is honoured. In this way the reader gains a sense of the writer as a full human being.

(Gergen and Gergen, 2002:13)

Auto-ethnography is a term increasingly used to identify studies 'that connect the personal to the cultural' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I worked in the organization as an employee between December 2004 and September 2005. There was a gap of eighteen months prior to my return to the organization as a researcher. The integration of my personal perspective provides my own insight into the organizational culture of Groundwork Northumberland as a former employee, and therefore is included as an auto-ethnographic account. This provides pre-research information which is explicitly detailed in the introductory chapter. In building up the research picture and telling my story, my pre-research information and experience is crucially important.

My experience has equipped me with background knowledge to the interview process; as an informed researcher my ability to understand the issues that arise are enhanced. Participants' insights are probably more infused with meaning to the researcher who is informed and sensitive to the culture, leading

to the opportunity to explore 'deeper, sub-conscious layers of meaning' (Crane, 1999:244).

Ellis and Bochner (2000:740) acknowledge and detail the wide range of approaches associated with auto-ethnography, as previously stated *reflexive ethnography* is deemed as most suitable to this study. In reflexive ethnographies, my personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study.

## **2.6 Methods of Data Collection**

In order to explore engagement with corporate social responsibility in the context of a third sector organization, the empirical data collection methods being utilised are: semi-structured interviews, research diaries, focus group, reflexivity and archival data.

The potential formulation of a strategy towards corporate social responsibility draws on the organisation as a whole and therefore it is important that individuals have the opportunity to voice their opinions (most importantly those that may not normally have, or feel they have, the opportunity to do so) especially in relation to their different work roles and responsibilities. Therefore multiple methods have been used to provide opportunities for participants to engage in the research.<sup>5</sup>

### **2.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

As already discussed, I was an employee of the research organization for nine months from December 2004 until September 2005 and therefore have worked alongside some of the research participants. Hence a semi-structured interview approach was chosen in which the interviewee was a partner in conversation during the interview process instead of a research object (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

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<sup>5</sup> Although the case organisation actively chose to participate in this project, there were times when it seemed that some individuals did not want to engage. This is evident particularly in the focus group dynamics which are discussed later.



The choice was made to conduct semi-structured interviews in order to provide an outline for the individual interviewee. This may seem contradictory to my philosophy as discussed previously. However, I found semi-structured questions to be a necessary guide for the interview participants, most of whom had not thought about, or engaged with, the idea of corporate social responsibility before taking part in the research. The interview guide was used to aid the process, gently leading conversations while I played the part of an active listener with the aim of giving the interviewee freedom. As it is more challenging to 'interview on a meaning level', listening to overt statements and meanings simultaneously to 'what is said between the lines' is essential (Kvale, 1996:32).

Eight Groundwork Northumberland employees participated in interviews: at the time of interviewing this comprised the whole organization. Their jobs were: Office Manager, Landscape Architect, Executive Director, Business Manager, Community Greenspace Officer, two Landscape Assistants, and Youth, Education and Community Co-ordinator. The following table provides some information on each participant, their role, length of employment at Groundwork Northumberland, the research stages in which each individual participated and the duration of interview.

**Table 2.1 Research Participants Information.**

	<i>Role</i>	<i>GN<sup>6</sup> start date</i>	<i>Research stage</i>	<i>Interview length</i>
Wendy	Business Manager	2006	Interview only (ML) <sup>7</sup>	65 mins
Gary	Office Manager	2005	Interview, diary and FG <sup>8</sup>	75 mins
Emma	Community Greenspace Officer	08/2006	Interview, diary and FG	45 mins
Hugh	Executive Director	2005	Interview, diary and FG	85 mins
Laura	Education Coordinator	G4G transfer	Interview only (ML)	101 mins
Louis	Landscape Assistant	09/2006	Interview	61 mins
Amelia	Landscape Architect and Manager	G4G transfer	Interview, diary and FG	60 mins
Lindsay	Landscape Assistant	2006	Interview only (R) <sup>9</sup>	21 mins
Barbara	Finance Manager	2008	FG	N/A

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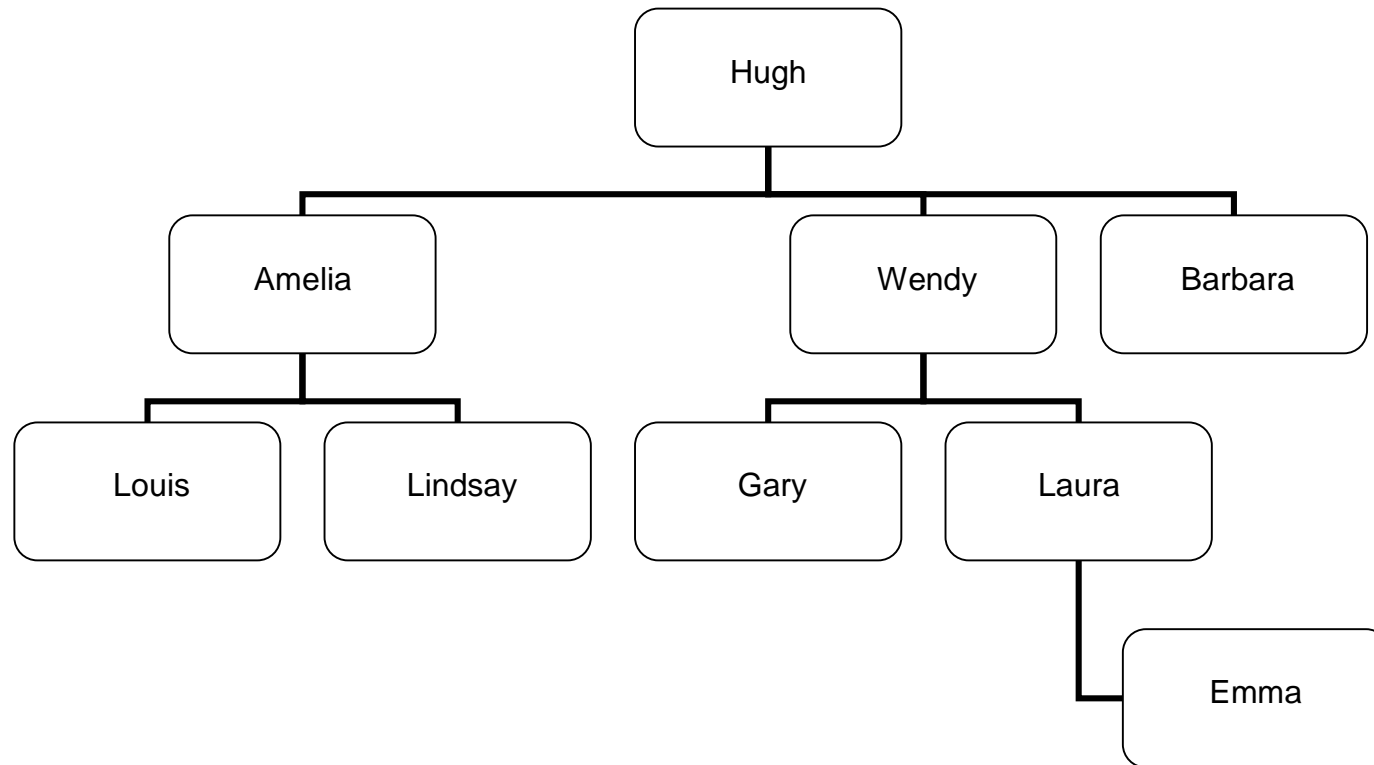
<sup>6</sup> Groundwork Northumberland

<sup>7</sup> ML = Maternity leave Due to maternity leave both Wendy and Laura only participated in interviews.

<sup>8</sup> FG = Focus Group

<sup>9</sup> R = Resignation Lindsay left Groundwork Northumberland in six months of her interview.

**Figure 2.2 The Hierarchical Structure of Groundwork Northumberland (at the research start date).**



Eight interviewees were chosen as this was the total workforce of the organization at the time, thus fitting the purpose of gaining 'thick description' from speaking to all organizational members (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989). Three new employees commenced their jobs at Groundwork Northumberland towards the end of the interview process. However, I decided not to interview them, due to their status as new starters; not yet socialised and alien to the culture of Groundwork Northumberland. The new employees were given the opportunity to take part in the focus group, which one of them, the Finance Manager took up.

Interview questions were sourced and adapted from the literature base; in particular from doctoral theses and journal articles (see Appendix Five for the interview questions). The interviews lasted between 35 minutes and 101 minutes and always took place in the premises of Groundwork Northumberland. The first interviews following the pilot took place in April 2007, the next interviews were held in August 2007. The time gap in between was used for initial analysis of the data and evaluation of the interview questions and the data being generated. The questions were subsequently amended to decrease the number and iteratively refine the remaining questions.

### **Transcription**

If one accepts as a main premise of interpretation that meaning depends on context then transcripts in isolation make an impoverished basis for interpretation.

(Kvale, 1996: 167)

Transcripts were written verbatim and then sent back to interviewees for approval with an open invitation to contact me with any questions, comments, or amendments. One person responded with an email informing me that she was satisfied. There were no other responses, except six months later one interviewee commented on all the spelling mistakes I'd left in his transcript; the umms and errrs.

Kvale (1996:168) draws attention to the often 'overlooked' transcription process, with particular concerns of reliability and validity. Reliability can be

attained through consistency; by transcribing each interview personally I maintained a uniform approach. There were still difficulties though, such as; Where does a sentence end? and When does a silence become a pause? Thus transcripts themselves are an interpretation, as choices are made in the representation of the interaction. Can this 'abstraction' in its 'frozen' form do justice to the original interaction (Kvale, 1996:165)?

The interview transcripts totalled 145 pages and 67,729 words. As well as recording and transcribing the interviews myself, lengthy notes were taken in my research diary describing and exploring the interview situation in relation to location, atmosphere and connection between interviewer and interviewee. I have found this extra information to be an added dimension that enriches the interview accounts and enhances the 'decontextualised' version of the interview that was taped (Kvale, 1996:160).

### **Reflection on Interviews**

In retrospect, I would have been more comfortable with a less structured approach though the semi-structured style felt necessary in exploring an unfamiliar concept, with some participants. I would instead have preferred narrative encouragement and a more open style.

Social desirability bias is of particular significance, in my view, when researching ethics. When researching ethics, as a subject which is concerned with right and wrong with elements of judgement, it may be assumed by a case organization that the researcher is judging them and/or they may be aware of how they are going to be portrayed. My identity as researcher had an impact, as many interviewees would ask if what they'd said was acceptable. On numerous occasions participants took long pauses informing me that they were trying to find the best example to fit my question, sometimes rejecting alternatives, although not giving any detail about the rejected examples to me. In those instances I felt that their perception of me as a researcher meant that they wanted to give me a good enough answer and felt under pressure to do so. I had emphasised at the beginning of each interview that I was interested in their opinion and there were no right or wrong answers, in order to pre-empt this factor. But nonetheless I found myself nodding and making affirming noises

and sometimes having to say 'Yes, that was fine.' as it was rather difficult to remain passive in the face of a question such as 'Was that ok?' and I also felt that the interviewee needed some reassurance.

### **Interview interaction**

Raz (2005) emphasises the interview interaction as a meaning making site in which both participants are active in negotiating arising meanings. Cassell (2008:15) draws attention to the power dynamics in the interview setting. She acknowledges that some Social Science researchers have discussed this from an 'emancipatory perspective', thereby regarding interviewers as having expertise and using participants' information, but not necessarily accounting for their use of it. In the earlier discussion it is clear that my perceived 'expertise' as researcher influenced participants' choice of examples.

Conversely there is also attention being paid to the fact that in organizational research, the position of the interviewee in the organization may place them in a more powerful position than the researcher (Cassell, 2008). In Groundwork Northumberland my interview with the Executive Director was marked by power dynamics. I had once been his low-level employee, and although he had given permission for this research to take place, I was very aware that he had the power to remove the organization from the research. The expectations of this senior interviewee, who has a vested interest and allowed the research to take place, must have an impact on the co-construction of meaning in the interview setting. The interview was not as comfortable as a few of the others had been. Kvale (2006) identifies interviews as a hierarchical encounter, and I certainly felt the presence of hierarchy in the room. The interview was held in the Executive Director's office and we sat opposite each other. I felt guarded and unable to respond or discuss in the way I had in previous interviews.

The other awkward interview took place with the Business Manager, Wendy, someone I knew little about and did not know personally. I felt like an outsider with this person, whereas with other participants, that had worked alongside me, I was treated as an insider. The Business Manager had previously been involved in research; therefore I was interviewing a fellow researcher. Bryman and Cassell (2006) discuss the difficulties of researching researchers, noting

the particular challenges for unconfident interviewers; I would extend this further to include inexperienced interviewers. In my interview with Wendy she was open about the fact that she had conducted research in previous jobs, this did not concern me. However, it was clear as the interview progressed that she was very guarded, remaining very particular about every word she chose to say, it has been observed that researcher interviewees are 'more likely to contest key terms' (Bryman and Cassell, 2006:52). She seemed very politically aware and sensitive in her responses. I am not sure that I saw the 'real' Wendy. When I re-counted a statement she had made, she denied having made it, though it is clearly audible on the tape, when it was re-played to her she denied her own words. This is where I felt my inexperience may have played a part, as I portrayed myself in a much meeker way than I normally did and did not embody the 'interviewer'.

Cassell (2008:16) highlights then that the 'interview in practice' may not be as 'sanitised' as some research method books present. Accounts that discuss the difficulties, unpredictability and undecidability in interviews are becoming more available (King, 2004; Learmonth, 2006). This has increased the legitimacy of interviewers' confessions with regards to the difficulties of interviewing (Cassell, 2008). However, an interviewer's career stage may impact on the 'confessional' as it may be safer to step out from the shadows as a senior researcher (Nadin and Cassell, 2006).

### **2.6.2 Research Diaries**

The inspiration for adopting research diaries as a research method originated from comments made by the first and third participants, at the end of the interview process. Their comments alluded, either implicitly or explicitly, to awareness that participating in the interview would have an impact on them. Amelia commented; "It's made me think about things differently." and Wendy noted that "This research will affect the way we view corporate social responsibility". The research diary method is being used in order to capture the impact that this research is having on the participants through drawing on their reflections post-interview and providing them with a 'reflexive place' (Lewis, Sligo and Massey, 2005:226).

One of the potential benefits of conducting diary studies in organizations is the ability to collect different perspectives from different individuals on the same [phenomenon].

(Symon, 1998:102)

The research diary is a familiar concept, the main features being regular completion over time by the participants in the recording of events, feelings and so on (Symon, 1998). The contribution that this method will provide to the ongoing research project is threefold; the research diary will:

Provide access to ongoing everyday behaviour, capture the immediacy of experience and provide accounts of phenomena over time.

(Symon, 1998:94)

Diaries can be used to collect data about a process and be complementary to other data collection methods (Lewis, Sligo and Massey, 2005). This data collection stage comprised two diaries: one of which was designed to circulate in the organization, and the second was to remain with a key participant. This meant that each interviewee could participate in the diary stage in a non-onerous manner. Diary participation was discussed informally at the end of each interview. There was a genuine interest and willingness to participate expressed by all the interviewees. A system was developed whereby a staff member completed the diary for a two week period, at the end of this time in order to ensure confidentiality the completed pages were sent to me for analysis. The diary was then passed on to the next person. The aim was to have the diary circulate Groundwork Northumberland over a period of fourteen weeks. However, most participants kept the diary for longer in order to capture their thoughts more completely. The process proved to be fluid with participants holding onto the diary, and so the original system devised, while operating successfully, has not kept to the expected time schedule. Further information on the dates of each research stage is provided in the following timeline:



**Table 2.3 Timeline of Research Engagement with Groundwork Northumberland**

Dec 2004 – Sept 2005	RH <sup>10</sup> works at GN <sup>11</sup> in role of Office Manager
<b>2007</b>	
February	Access granted to research GN.
March	Pilot interview
April	Two further interviews take place
May – July	Rotating diary begins (pilot participant)
August 6 <sup>th</sup> , 20	Remaining interviews take place (five participants)
August - Sept	Participant 2 keeps a diary
<b>2008</b>	
May – June	Participant 3 keeps a diary
June	Research report circulated in GN
June 16 <sup>th</sup>	Focus Group
July	Participant 4 keeps a diary
September	GN Volunteering Day

<sup>10</sup> RH = Rima Hussein, i.e. the author

<sup>11</sup> GN = Abbreviation of Groundwork Northumberland

The second diary remained intentionally with one participant for a longer period of time (three months) in order to gain a longitudinal perspective over a proposed three-month period. The chosen participant was the Executive Director. As the leader of Groundwork Northumberland he showed great interest in the research as well as having the advantage of access to strategic conversations on the topic of corporate social responsibility. He is also the figurehead for 'partnership working' which is an emerging theme from the interviews that have taken place.

### **Pilot diary**

As recommended by Symon (1998), a pilot diary was initiated, kept by one participant for a two-week period; the diarist was Amelia, my first interviewee and long-term friend. This retained some continuity with the interview process and was purposely left unstructured. During the pilot phase I kept regular contact with the participant in order to discuss her perspective on diary keeping and any issues/queries that she may have had. It is important to keep regular contact with the participant diarist, particularly in the design stage, when it may be useful to collaborate with the participant to strengthen design features such as structure (Symon, 1998). The diarist may then become more of a co-researcher than a research participant. Symon advises it is crucial to motivate, but not pressurise, through this communication.

The first contact,<sup>12</sup> with the participant resulted in an agreement that more structure needed to be provided for future participants. Towards the end of the diary period the participant found it "difficult" but acknowledged she thinks a great deal about what she writes and likes it to be concise. She viewed the diary as a supplement to the interview and we both agreed of our awareness of the capacity of the diary to chronicle the changes that may be triggered by the interview process. We held a de-briefing session to help me interpret and for us both to discuss questions/issues arising, as directed by Symon. While Amelia initially requested more structure, we discussed how this was an opportunity for participants to set their own thoughts down without any direction, and decided

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<sup>12</sup> By telephone on the 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2007.

to continue with an unstructured approach but to provide a message to each participant, as follows:

*In your two weeks please could you note down any thoughts, reflections or comments that you have had after our interview in relation to what we discussed. You may want to read your interview transcription to refresh your memory!*

(E-mail directions to participants)

An email was sent to each participant with the above message and further information on confidentiality. Four people ended up using the diary and seemed comfortable with an unstructured set up. Out of the eight interviewees, one person left the organization, two people took maternity leave and one person was too busy to participate, hence the decreased participation at the diary stage. By triangulating data collection methods I hope to be able to identify consistency and inconsistencies in participants' accounts, and analyze the differing accounts. Denzin (1970:313) describes triangulation as "combining multiple observers, theories, methods and data sources" in order to strengthen and override "the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer and single-theory studies". It is important to utilize differing methods to allow differing perspectives the opportunity to appear (Trend, 1978, cited by Lewis, Sligo and Massey, 2005).

In practice the research diary was not used as seamlessly as first planned. Each participant hung on to the diary for far longer than predicted, usually for about one month. From May to September 2007 two participants used the diary, and then there was a gap until May-July 2008 when the next two participants were diary keepers. This gap was not intended, but occurred due to the heavy workload of research participants and the fact that it was difficult to keep close contact with each participant as at the time of the diary circulating I was not visiting the organization. I emailed and called each participant, but there seemed to be some reluctance on their part to respond, and I did not want to be perceived as pushing or harassing them. This turn of events was actually beneficial; giving me the opportunity to read the diary accounts after all the interviews had taken place, thereby providing more of a longitudinal perspective of the research impact.

Due to the diary changes, I felt quite distant from the process, which I had not anticipated. Therefore, I was concerned that the participants felt unsupported. However, when I received the diary notes I was enthused by their responses, there were a couple of instances that greatly surprised me in their relaxed and stimulating writing. The diary provided a strong sense of each individual and their unguided thoughts on corporate social responsibility issues in their organization.

The nature of the diary, which is simultaneously a dialogue with oneself and with the researchers whom the individual knows are going to be reading his or her words, permitted respondents to reflect in self-aware ways that they might not have otherwise experienced on intrapersonal, interpersonal and business-related issues relevant to the subject.

(Lewis, Sligo and Massey, 2005:223)

It was evident that these individuals were engaging with an opportunity to 'stand back' from their practice and reflect, which otherwise would not have taken place (Lewis, Sligo and Massey, 2005:221). Lewis, Sligo and Massey (2005) took this a step further by holding second interviews with their participants in which they asked any follow-up questions deemed necessary. I did not consider this the best option, as the time that Groundwork Northumberland had already given was considerable to them as a small organization. Therefore, for practical reasons a debriefing telephone conversation was held with each participant. I did not probe them on the meanings they had attributed to their writing, but instead focussed on how the process had proceeded. I did not create a space for asking participants' questions about their content, which in hindsight I feel would have been useful as confirmation of the interpretation that I was making of the diary entries. I would have also changed the process by which the participants' received the diary, instead of rotating the diary I would have given the diary to each participant simultaneously using multiple copies of a diary. Although the way the diary worked in practice meant I had data that showed signs of the impact the research was having from a more longitudinal perspective.

### 2.6.3 Focus Group

The last stage in data collection, which followed on from the diaries, was a focus group. Focus groups originated from Columbia University in 1941 with the name “focussed interviews”. The method was also known as ‘group depth interviews’ (Smith, 1954) involving a number of people who had a shared interest. They aim to gather more insightful information than is available in one-to-one relationships, with the addition of a moderator to facilitate the method. A focus group usually consists of eight to ten individuals who discuss a specific subject under the guidance of a moderator whose job it is to encourage interaction and maintain discussion in the subject of interest (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). ‘Focus groups produce a very rich body of data expressed in the respondents’ own words and context’ (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:12) and are of particular value for research that is exploratory.

The choice to use a focus group was inductively reached through recognition of the impact that this research was having on the organization. The process of data collection and the increased awareness of participants following interviews, instigated changes in the organization. These changes have been evident in conversations that participants have been having with each other and actions taken, such as corporate social responsibility becoming more of a priority in the Beta Plus agenda that is being pursued at the present time (see Chapter 1). Though action research was not being used in this research it was important to me that the organization, having given time to take part in this project, got something back. They expressed their enthusiasm in formulating a way forward through a plan of action and utilising the momentum that had been started. It was decided to hold the focus group following analysis of interview and diary data in order that participants had some feedback from the research process. This may have also provided greater awareness of issues or questions that were of particular relevance to Groundwork Northumberland. The focus group would therefore be the last phase of the research.

A focus group was held for one hour with five employees<sup>13</sup> participating. Prior to the meeting a report (see Appendix Three) was circulated to all members of

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<sup>13</sup> The five participants were; Hugh (Executive Director), Gary (Office Manager), Emma (Community Greenspace Officer), Amelia (Landscape Architect) and Barbara (Finance Manager).

Groundwork Northumberland which summarised the themes arising from the interviews. This material was used as a basis for discussion in the meeting. My role was titled 'facilitator', at the request of the Executive Director of Groundwork Northumberland. The focus group was held in the usual slot of their weekly team meeting.

### **Group Dynamics**

The use of focus groups opens up the opportunity to explore group characteristics and dynamics as an influence on meaning making and on the everyday practice of an organization (Kamberlis and Dimitriadis, 2005). Further to that, Kamberlis and Dimitriadis (2005:903) assert that potential data gathered from focus groups may provide powerful insights which are not available in an individual interview setting. As they benefit from the "richness" and "complexity" of the group setting:

Acting somewhat like magnifying glasses, focus groups induce social interactions akin to those that occur in everyday life but with greater focus.

(ibid)

Insights into the way participants "position" themselves in regards to one another, the dynamics then become "units of analysis" themselves (Kamberlis and Dimitriadis, 2005).

*"I'm so emotionally involved and because of that I had high expectations of the outcomes from the meeting. All that came was a volunteer day. I also hoped for a dynamic exchange and to really give something back. I don't feel I did that."*

(RH diary insert, June 20<sup>th</sup> 2008)

Dynamics in a focus group can have potential negative impact as:

Usefulness and validity of focus group data are affected by the extent to which participants feel comfortable about openly communicating their ideas, views or opinions.

(Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:33)

*“I wonder if people felt comfortable discussing the issues together. As Executive Director seemed to lead discussion, perhaps to project a strong leader image to me?”*

(RH diary insert, June 20<sup>th</sup> 2008)

Environmental factors, such as seating and spatial distance, impact on the possibility of free-flowing and open conversation taking place (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). It has been noted by Stewart and Shamdasani (ibid) that participants usually feel more comfortable around a table, providing a “protective barrier” giving some reassurance to less secure members. Two participants chose to sit behind tables. The executive director dictated the location and layout, sitting beside me in the loose circle formed by the participants. The mediator should take on leadership of the group in a focus group setting; therefore I attempted to assert my role by taking a central position. However, since the leader entered the room and sat beside me it was difficult for me to do so. The Executive Director holds legitimate power, therefore it is important to analyze how this affected others people’s behaviour and reactions. Smith (1954) argues that having people who know each other affects the dynamics and hinders responses. While considering this prior to the focus group, I thought that the group’s composition as work colleagues would be a strength as there would be greater motivation for participation and engagement. However, having the natural leader of the group present affected my role as mediator and inhibited my ability to fulfill the mediator’s purpose in creating rapport and motivating individuals to share their thoughts (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990).

The initial job of the interviewer is to create a non-threatening and non-evaluative environment in which group members feel free to express themselves openly and without concern for whether others in the group agree with the opinions offered.

(Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:87)

I found it hard to fulfill this crucial aspect of my role. Office-based roles were more represented in the focus group than project workers; due to their schedules there were only two workers who manage projects present. The three most vocal contributors were the Executive Director, Landscape Architect

and Finance Manager. The Office Manager made some controversial comments, which would be followed by silence. For example:

The main danger is not missing something, it's ignoring something. I've found that is the problem with a lot of people, they get something and they just totally ignore it and then go back to it afterwards and then 'I haven't got enough time to complete it now'.

(Gary, focus group)

Then discussion would continue as if nobody had spoken. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) warn that it may be necessary to encourage lower status members to participate. I had not deemed this necessary with Groundwork Northumberland being a 'self-regulating' group.

Kamberlis and Dimitriadis (2005:903) observe that focus groups may be utilised to 'inhibit the authority of researchers' and to 'allow participants to "take over" and "own" the interview space' (emphasis in original). It is implied that this can be done in a positive strategic move by the researcher. In the focus group that took place as part of this research, the Executive Director was off-hand in his manner and critical of my work. Perhaps he was reclaiming his authority in my place. I had sensitively informed him prior to the focus group in a telephone conversation that there were some leadership issues evident from the interview analysis. I had decided to speak to him personally rather than include them in the report. Conceivably this had affected his reaction towards me. So while Kamberlis and Dimitriadis (2005) indicate a positive opportunity available through focus groups placing research ownership with participants, in this case the attempt to do so, led to an undermining of the moderator's role and a rather awkward and stifled focus group. It has been argued by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) that less than eight people may lead to narrow discussion and could become skewed towards a few individuals; it seems that this may indeed have occurred.

### **Moving Forward**

Lack of action points was a voiced criticism by the Executive Director, as critic of the report that I provided as a basis for the meeting.



*...in terms of a lack of action points – I did not want to direct the organization down something that I suggested. What do they want my role to be? More of a consultant I feel. I thought action was what the focus group was set up for. Anyhow I said I would put together some action points from the focus group meeting.*

(RH diary insert, June 20<sup>th</sup> 2008)

A lesson that I have learnt from this is to be very clear with the research organization regarding the expected outcomes, thus having a clear understanding and being able to manage expectations. I had to keep reminding myself that I was not a consultant. The climate in which the focus group took place was tense, not only due to the reasons already discussed, but also because a senior manager attending the group informed the Executive Director earlier that day that she was leaving the organization.

Kamberlis and Dimitriadis (2005:905) conclude that focus groups hold little guarantees. Echoing Kamberlis and Dimitriadis, I conclude by acknowledging the “uncertain landscape” of a qualitative researcher with the aim of helping research participants or leaving them in a better position than when the research started. One outcome achieved from the meeting was agreement on a volunteer day for the whole organization to participate in, which I was invited to attend. I sought feedback from participants post focus group as I was interested in their perceptions of how successful the focus group had been. Emma commented when asked how she thought it had gone:

“Good, everyone said what they wanted to say...good to get everyone together. I didn't have a lot to say so long after the interview.”

(Emma, Telephone call, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2008)

#### **2.6.4 Archival Data**

Some archival documents were used to give an overall picture strategically of the positioning of Groundwork Northumberland and their plans for the future. I was provided with documents relating to their Beta Plus accreditation meetings, which gave an overview of their first meeting, a brainstorming session attended by all employees. These documents consisted of detailed lists compiled by employees noting their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of Groundwork Northumberland (see Appendix Six).

It has been useful to utilize this information as a backdrop to the research data, as themes emerging from in the data were clearly acknowledged and had some parallels in the Beta Plus documentation. It also provides an interesting insight into the expressed opinions of the group while in the presence of colleagues. These documents relating to the Beta Plus accreditations are clear and have been utilised to cross-reference with the issues arising from the one-to-one interview data. It has even been possible in some cases to identify the individual and their grievance, as it echoes closely words expressed in the interview setting.

A search of 'Third Sector Daily', a daily magazine bulletin for third sector workers was also undertaken. Articles from January to October 2008 were searched to provide further insight into sector-specific issues, highlighting the following issues: funding, public trust, accountability, transparency and governance.

### **2.6.5 Reflexivity**

I was not a fly on the wall during this study, I also constructed and influenced this research, by writing reflexively I hope to allow space for readers to judge the credibility and dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of my work alongside the impact I had on this research. In the words of Tony Watson I intend to 'reveal the hand' (Watson, 1994:7).

It is important to acknowledge the presence of my voice, firstly, as decisions are made which impact on the research and secondly, in order to give a true account of the twists and turns in the research process (Silverman, 2005). According to Elliott (2006:155) adopting this approach acknowledges my role as a story-teller in the narrative of my research journey through an 'analytical discussion of how theoretical and biographical perspective may impact on relationships with research subjects, interpretations and presentation of research'.

A 'reflexive stance' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) has been encouraged through continuous regular documentation in my research diary. This has been used to encourage reflection, to illustrate my development of thinking, to inspire ideas for the future course of the research and to provide an added layer to enrich the discussion in this chapter (Silverman, 2005). The practice of keeping the research diary has confirmed my instinctive belief that every interaction is data. I continually find that even the smallest entry sheds light when read at a later date and forms part of the research puzzle. I have logged telephone calls, visits and thoughts continuously; reflexivity is an 'ongoing process' (Nadin and Cassell, 2006:212).

As a chronicle of events that unfolded throughout the research process, my diary pinpoints how I felt at particular stages which if I were to rely on memory alone I would not be able to recall. Seeing my thoughts after each interview particularly helped to re-contextualise each interview setting and atmosphere when at the analysis stage. An interview may be a positive interaction, but at the same time 'anxiety provoking' and able to 'evoke defence mechanisms' in both interviewee and interviewer. Therefore the dynamics in the interaction need to be taken into account and included in analysis (Kvale, 1996:35).

Alvesson et al (2008) have placed reflexive approaches of researchers into four strategies: multi-perspective, multi-voicing, positioning and de-stabilising. This research is drawing on one approach in particular, multi-voicing. Reflexivity, as multi-voicing practices, focuses on the field workers' position in relation to the 'other' (research subject) and draws on sociology and anthropology. This approach encourages the negotiation of meanings between me and the research subject, highlighting that I am part of the research and in fact my 'researcher identity' is constructed through the process. I have presented my own experiences and interests as it is crucial to make visible how the work has evolved. Reflexive ethnographies exemplify this approach.

Alvesson et al critique each approach in turn in order to further develop the strength of 'reflexivities' (2008:495). In order to support a multi-voicing reflexivity it is suggested that asking questions about the relationship between a researcher and the 'other' is crucial if at all possible, we then need to consider

how a researcher can represent research subjects 'authentically' (ibid:487). Putnam (1996:386) proposes multiple readings that involve participants, readers and audience, with the aim of acknowledging that the research account is one possible version among many. The position of researcher is questioned in terms of power by Marcus (1994) and addressed through conscious transference of this power by including the reader and research participant more actively in the interpretation of meaning. In fact this expansion of reflexivity extends to relationships with ourselves, participants, readers and audiences (Doucet, 2007).

The researcher, by engaging in reflexive practices, accounts for her role as a participant and opens up discussions of her own interests or 'sins' (Alvesson et al, 2008:488). The researcher therefore is a fellow research subject though with the 'skill' to enact the practice necessary (Vidich and Lyman, 2000). This is critiqued by Clegg and Hardy (1996) noting that practices specifically used to diminish the researcher's role and allow more space for research subjects can end up having the opposite effect by drawing attention to the researcher.

Some writers place the experience of the researcher at the centre (Van Maanen, 1988), this has been criticised for making the researcher the 'fieldsite' (Robertson, 2002) at the 'expense' of the empirical research (Fournier and Grey, 2000), as researchers 'tend to be more interested in our practices than in those of anybody else' (Weick, 2002:898). Therefore Alvesson et al (2008) highlight narcissism and the inability to give everyone voice or equal voice as limitations to a multi-voicing reflexivity, while Nadin and Cassell (2006:210) warn us of the 'thin line between interesting insights and self-indulgence'. Is it that we are more interested in our own practices? Or, that we know it is crucial to acknowledge and make as visible as possible the part that is played and the footsteps that are left on the research by me. In my view, we research because we are more interested in others than ourselves, but in the process we learn about ourselves and add this to the account in order to provide a richer picture of the research journey. As for 'giving voice', the reflexive story does not explain that I may not have been able to reach everyone or provide equal opportunity for all. This tells us more than is alluded to by Alvesson et al (2008).

It tells us something about the status of the research and situations in which the research subjects, for example, may not want their voices to be heard.

### **Research relationships**

The 'use of self as an instrument of research' (Smircich, 1983:171; Dey, 2002) is widely and increasingly acknowledged among qualitative researchers. This has led to the unloading and unveiling of the messiness that occurs throughout the research process, in other words the 'confessions of the researcher' (Dey, 2002). This is to recognise that in the words of Tony Watson (1994:7) '...the account of all this is written by me. It is my construction - anxious as I am to represent the views and feelings of others'. My 'confessions' follow in the next section.

I have built up a long-term relationship with this organization, as an ex-employee, and therefore feel able to ask awkward questions and to facilitate their engagement with those questions more so than an outsider. My findings may therefore be evaluated in accordance with Groundwork Northumberland's engagement with the research project. I do not claim to be independent of this research, in fact I am an intrinsic part, which is acknowledged and accounted for through my use of auto-ethnography and reflexivity.

While my previous employment gave me great insight into the workings of the organisation it also led to feelings of discomfort at times. I often wondered whether my performance as a previous employee was affecting reactions towards me as a researcher and felt unsure of my role on a number of occasions. I went through a process of soul searching and questioning my place in the research process, which changed continually. Yet, through the research process I entered the perceptions, values and attitudes of the community, thereby building identity through the process. Identity in a single interview situation continually shifts (Cassell, 2008) and therefore the potential identity changes in the whole research process are complex.

I did move at least in my mind from an inquirer to a facilitator. Though at times I felt like an intruder, an imposter and a spy, especially when conversing with my

friend Amelia whom I have known for five years. She held one of the senior management positions in Groundwork Northumberland and was a key supporter of the research project and the first person I interviewed; she could be considered my 'gate keeper'. She would often tell me stories or details in our personal conversations aside from data collection which I felt were important, yet I was very aware that she may not have told another researcher the same information. I thought it important to make a note of what we had discussed at the time and yet I felt uncomfortable at the thought that I was taking advantage of my privileged position as her friend. I often found myself calling Amelia when I hit a spot at which I was unsure how the research was progressing in regards to Groundwork Northumberland's attitude towards the project. She became my informant and key ally.

My relationships with the other research participants varied hugely, I had worked for the Executive Director previously and he was extremely helpful and relaxed about the project. However, the second senior manager, alongside Amelia, Wendy, was difficult at times. She gave me the impression as a former researcher herself that she was not fully on board with the project initially. She almost held power similar to a gatekeeper role as I felt particularly uncomfortable being at Groundwork Northumberland when she was present. I knew one other participant from my previous employment and she was in middle management and so I had relationships with all of the management level employees, but all of the lower level employees were new and unknown to me. On their part there seemed to be a curiosity about my research, but despite emailing them on several occasions to provide information on the project I received no response. I realised that they were happier with face-to-face contact and as such had no need for extra information and were quite interested to take part. Perhaps this was due to pressure imposed by the management buy in, as in the Executive Director was interested in the research and had given me access prior to my contact with future participants.

Although I am reluctant to use the expression I ought to acknowledge my role as an 'agent of change' (Cramer et al, 2004a). Through this research I have discussed corporate social responsibility with each person in the organization, introducing an alien concept to some and providing the space for others to have

time to contemplate such matters more deeply. There are signs that corporate social responsibility has risen in importance in this organization; time has been assigned to formulating a strategy for the future through the focus group. Corporate social responsibility is now on the Beta Plus agenda which Groundwork Northumberland is currently working on. Cramer et al (2004a) discuss how the change agents' own characteristics impacted on the change processes. This finding highlights more strongly my own role as a change agent in this research organization, supporting and advocating the importance of the approach adopted; it becomes necessary to write myself into the thesis, as without my account the picture is not complete.

There are aspects of the "halfie" researcher in this project, as defined by Czarniawska (1998), this is an acknowledgement that contrary to traditional ethnographies, I worked in the organization for nine months and then left the organization and then returned into the organization as a researcher. Therefore rather than writing field notes when encountering the organization as an immersed insider, I am reflecting on my experiences in the organization as a worker, at a later date.

When re-entering the organization there was awkwardness with members of the organization that had arrived after my departure. I had left GN relieved to be going, as my role in the organization, was quite distant from colleagues in that project workers spent time outside the office, and had contacts to maintain. Whereas the only type of contacts that I made were with office supply salespeople, watercooler distributors and finance officers in the local authority, and I spent most of my time in the office. Though I knew that my role supported the project workers I had walked into an organization undergoing major changes, with a complete lack of financial systems, and therefore the atmosphere in which I worked was difficult.

## **2.8 Methods of Data Analysis**

In a case study analysing and collecting data overlap (Eisenhardt, 1989). Mason (1996:6, cited by Raz, 2005) encourages 'critical self-scrutiny' whereupon it is necessary for me to continually assess my part in the research while in the process of collecting and analysing data.

It is important to note that it is not intended to assess the truthfulness of participant's statements, the feelings and opinions voiced are 'true' because they represent the participant's position in the interview (Raz, 2005). As Kvale (1996:34) highlights:

The aim of the qualitative interview is not to end up with un-equivocal and quantifiable meanings on the themes in focus. What matters is rather to describe precisely the possibly ambiguous and contradictory meanings expressed by the interviewee.

However, there has been a process of comparison and contrast used in data analysis, by setting diary data (respondents' own words) next to that of themes derived from the interviews (i.e. Interviewers' perceptions), as advocated by Lewis, Sligo and Massey (2005).

### **2.8.1 Data Reduction, Display and Conclusion Drawing**

The data analysis methods employed in this thesis are drawn from Huberman and Miles (1998) established processes of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The three sub-processes are enacted in an 'interactive, cyclical' course (Miles & Huberman, 1994:12).

The first stage, data reduction, is defined as 'sharpening, sorting, focusing, discarding and organizing data' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:13), in other words narrowing and focusing the research area through choosing the conceptual framework, research questions, cases and instruments (Huberman & Miles, 1998). Then initial analysis begins through working with field notes, interviews and other data through a variety of possible tools: summarising, coding, theme finding, clustering and writing stories, in order to further condense the data.

It is acknowledged in the literature that one of the main criticisms of coding is the fragmentation of the data or participants' accounts. The data collected to date has consisted of fragmented accounts; therefore themes have been used intuitively. Transcripts are 'decontextualised conversations' (Kvale, 1996:165), so the interview themes were identified through several listenings rather than



relying solely on the transcripts. Stories have also been used to build up a picture of each interviewee and their inter-relationships in Groundwork Northumberland.

Every human situation is novel, emergent and filled with multiple, often conflicting, meanings and interpretations.

(Denzin, 1983:133)

The second part of analysis is data display; 'an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing/action taking' (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This step reduces the data set in order to deepen analysis; this can be done through a variety of methods: summaries, diagrams and matrices. Displays assemble information in an 'immediately accessible, compact form' (Huberman & Miles, 1998:180) so that tentative conclusions may be drawn or the data may progress to the next stage of analysis that the display suggests is appropriate. Following initial theme finding and comparison of individual accounts (between interviews and diaries and the focus group), stories have been compiled of each individual which then provided a basis of exploring connections across individuals' accounts. As well as building each individual's story, notes were read to identify regularly occurring phrases and to consider surprising or counter-intuitive material that needed clarification elsewhere. A re-reading of field notes of contrasting groups was used to be sensitised to differences. Field notes were also cut into segments with potential important points then divided into categories and differences which gave an indication of frequency

Conclusion drawing and verification is the third stage which centres on 'drawing meaning' (Huberman & Miles, 1998:180). Various tactics are available: comparison/contrast, patterns/themes, clustering, metaphors (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Main themes from across the data accounts were considered, with emphasis on maintaining the richness of the data. The concluding themes were chosen as representative of the main issues connecting with the aims of this thesis.

The choice of this process of analysis acknowledges and allows for the flexible, inductive nature of this research, and is especially suited to 'unfamiliar terrain' and 'exploratory, descriptive single cases' (Huberman & Miles, 1998:185).

### **2.8.2 Deconstruction**

As well as the analysis discussed above, there were considerations throughout of deconstruction. Since Derrida does not advocate using deconstruction as a strategy or method, the notion of a deconstruction framework is not appropriate. This awareness introduced practical and theoretical issues around how to know what to look for and the notion of starting and finishing when attempting to engage in work of deconstruction and Corporate Social Responsibility. There were problems faced by me, a researcher interested in and finding connections between interview data and Derrida and yet not having the advantage of philosophical training. I considered Martin (1990:355) and Boje's (2001:21) deconstruction frameworks that have been highlighted as introductory means of engaging with deconstruction by Jones (2004) and also considered as holding the danger of reducing deconstruction to a step by step process. I decided to flow with the complexity and chaos of the data and sensitively identify some of the boundaries that may be considered in the space between Corporate Social Responsibility and the research organization, as a means of engaging with deconstruction and Derrida. I also found Martin's (1990: 340) statement on deconstruction to hold some resonance for this piece of work:

Deconstruction peels away the layers of ideological obscuration, exposing the conflict that has been suppressed; the devalued "other" is made visible.

### **2.9 Evaluation of research strategy and methods**

At this stage the question of how these methods should be judged becomes vital. While the case explored may provide insights for those in the sector, generalisability is not sought. This research may be evaluated according to its transferability in illuminating the lived experience of participants' journey, which may provide an insight for others in the same sector. In this qualitative piece of work validity is understood in terms of its persuasiveness, resonance and reflexivity.

Further to that alternative criteria can be used as a means of reference. Lincoln and Guba (1985); replace internal validity with credibility (authentic representations), replace external validity with transferability to similar contexts (extent of applicability), replace reliability with dependability (minimisation of researcher idiosyncrasies), and replace objectivity with confirmability (researcher self-criticism). These are the criteria with which I assess my work and which I should like readers to keep in mind when considering my work.

Smircich (1983:164) also provides some questions which may be used in evaluating a cultural study; how well does it capture the experience of that group? How well does it allow others to know the meanings for social action held by the people in that setting? How well is our understanding of social life beyond this particular setting enhanced?

This project is valuable due to the unique context in which it is placed and the rich detail generated. This may not be able to be generalized in the third sector context, but certainly may be generalized in terms of the original theoretical contribution (Yin, 1983). It may also be possible to share findings and lessons from this research with other organizations in the same sector.

Due to the time constraints in the doctoral process it will not be possible to document the full impact of the organizational engagement with corporate social responsibility. As already acknowledged corporate social responsibility is about the journey as much as the destination, therefore while I will not be able to fully document the final destination, I shall have started this organization on their journey. It is important that this journey takes time and unfortunately the doctoral process itself fixes the outcome in terms of time.

The interaction taking place in the interviews gave corporate social responsibility meaning. Some participants had not previously considered what corporate social responsibility meant and were not familiar with the subject. While others, displayed knowledge about the subject area and the interview provided the opportunity and time to consider questions which normally would be superseded by other demands. Outside of the interview arena, the

opportunity to come together and discuss these issues in a focus group provided a setting in which to interact and consider these issues alongside fellow workers.

### **2.9.1 Ethical Issues**

Due consideration has been given to ethical guidelines. Organizational and individual consent forms have been completed with specific attention paid to confidentiality in dissemination of this work and research outputs. The executive director of Groundwork Northumberland has given his full consent to this project he has allowed the organization to be named within this thesis but has specifically asked that the organization remains anonymous in publications. I have maintained awareness in terms of ethical issues arising.

Considerations of confidentiality influenced my decision to create a report for feedback to the research organization rather than provide a copy of the thesis, as I considered participants would be identifiable to colleagues reading the thesis and therefore vulnerable and exposed. All participants have been given pseudonyms within this thesis and in the report which was provided to Groundwork Northumberland.

### **2.9.2 Reflections**

As with all undertakings of such a colossal nature there are considerations and lessons to be gained for future research projects. Certainly I would have liked to have spent more time undertaking the research with the organization in order to follow the process for longer, thereby providing a more longitudinal perspective.

It would have been interesting to have discussions with other Groundwork Trusts, in order to have a fuller understanding of the impact of Groundwork UK on the operations of the individual trust and the aspirations of the umbrella organization in relation to corporate social responsibility.

To have discussed this research with other third sector organizations would also have added depth to the findings, particularly those in the same area (i.e. environmental regeneration).

## **Chapter Three Literature Review**

This chapter provides an overview of corporate social responsibility, practice based ethics and culture literature, and considers the third sector and small business context. This begins with corporate social responsibility moving onto practice based ethics, drawing on Derrida. Then the culture literature is introduced, in particular the three perspectives of Martin's (1995) framework, alongside meaning making.

### **3.1 Conventional Business Ethics through Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility (hereafter referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility) has become one of the phrases used by business executives in the twenty first century and shows no signs of waning in popularity due to attention from the media, enlightened consumers and the business world alike. Bucholz and Rosenthal (1998:5) define social responsibility as:

‘...fundamentally an ethical concept involving changing notions of human welfare and emphasising a concern with the social dimensions of business activity that have to do with improving the quality of life in society’.

While the European Commission's Green Paper (2001) defined Corporate Social Responsibility as ‘a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis’.

Carroll (1999) tracks the development of the Corporate Social Responsibility construct from the 1950s, which he indicates as the ‘modern era’, he charts the increase in definitions during the 1960s which continued to flourish during the 1970s. By the 1980s, there were fewer burgeoning definitions, developments in empirical research and differing ‘themes’ became established, such as corporate social performance, stakeholder theory, and business ethics theory. In the 1990s Corporate Social Responsibility remained a central concept through conversion to the differing themes noted above, as concern shifted to operationalise the construct. Carroll (1999) bases his chronological account on

the American literature base and acknowledges that there may be further related conceptions used in theory and practice in other countries and alternative periods, thereby alluding to the dynamic characteristics of the concept.

Social responsibilities have come to be recognised as an integral consideration in the business world, to a greater or lesser degree, giving rise to 'Corporate Social Responsibility'. The concept has, to date, very much resided in the corporate sector in the UK whose liberal attitude towards the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility places a voluntary onus of responsibility with the private sector (Perrini et al, 2006).

What does responsibility mean? Corporate social responsibilities can be viewed as ethical or moral imperatives in *tension* with the pursuit of profit or as *positive attributes* to be built into corporate strategy and part of the pursuit of profit (Belcher, 2002: 50). It could be argued that the tension that exists between pure profit making and ethical imperatives are there to inspire action. It is through experiencing this tension that we can start to consider our priorities. Nonetheless, there are debates questioning the benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility to conventional business imperatives. For example, recent research provided evidence that Corporate Social Responsibility does in fact improve the bottom-line of a company through increasing motivation of employees, as well as providing further advantages of improved reputation, recruitment, and retention of staff (MORI, 2006). For ethicists of most varieties however, ethical action is taken for its own sake (MacIntyre, 1985). Second it is argued that it is increasingly important that corporations are aware of social responsibilities in relation to the power they now hold in society (Solomon, 1993). The *conventional* Corporate Social Responsibility literature suggests that the main drivers for corporate social responsibility initiatives are; the public's increased awareness of environmental issues, the growth of the ethical consumer and calls for greater transparency following corporate scandals. It may be noted that these drivers are externally based, rather than internally driven. The media has also played its part in this, with reports and exposes on corporations' ethical performance. While in a recent research study eighty six percent of British employees surveyed stated their belief in the importance of

their employer being responsible to the environment and society (Palimeris, 2006).

### **Definition Contested**

Corporate Social Responsibility remains 'difficult to operationalise', 'ambiguous' and widely debated (Pedersen, 2006: 137) as a concept that has definitional ambiguity (Carroll, 1999). Due to this although Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have been supported by some for decades 'there are no broadly shared meanings and no widely agreed definitions' (Kakabadse & Rozuel, 2006: 79). Perhaps as a result of this, a plethora of associated approaches have developed in the literature; corporate social performance, corporate citizenship, triple-bottom line *inter alia*. According to Perrini et al (2006) the main quest of these synonyms is in determining the place of business in wider society as Corporate Social Responsibility attends to the most integral worries of the general public in relation to the relationships of business and society (Carroll, 1999).

McWilliams et al (2006: 8) identify theoretical issues that remain unresolved in the Corporate Social Responsibility field; one such issue is described as follows:

Having a good definition of Corporate Social Responsibility, with a common terminology, would aid us in modelling the role of organizational culture and leadership in determining the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in an organization.

The term 'good' is a surprisingly value-laden word with which to frame this issue. How can one definition of Corporate Social Responsibility be possible, when it is this word 'good' that is contested on the part of researchers with different interests? What does it mean to have a 'good' definition? The complexity that is Corporate Social Responsibility is not reducible to a common definition. How does this translate to practice? Would a model be of any use? DeGeorge (2008) seems to support McWilliams et al's concerns and questions how action can be taken without any parameters, though the safety provided by parameters or limits has been challenged by Jones (2003) as reducing the possibilities for action. Corporate Social Responsibility 'means different things

to different people at different times' with the opportunity for 'new issues' to be 'included' in extant definitions (Pedersen, 2006:139).

### **3.1.1 Corporate Social Responsibility Artefacts**

From these ambiguous definitions, we may ask in the light of DeGeorge's (2008) critique, how are companies to engage with Corporate Social Responsibility? With the growing interest in Corporate Social Responsibility, which was outlined earlier, there may be higher expectations and pressure on organizations to engage, or to *be seen* to engage, leading to organization's manifestations of Corporate Social Responsibility. These manifestations could be described as artefacts; which are tangible, visible in and potentially outside the organization. Examples include codes of conduct, ethics officers, Corporate Social Responsibility departments, reporting in annual company reports, explicit statements/visible notices on Corporate Social Responsibility, advertising slogans and so on. We will focus on the code of conduct as a Corporate Social Responsibility artefact for the following discussion.

The lack of definition and straightforward answers may have led to organizations adopting codes through which to communicate to employees what is deemed appropriate behaviour. Codes of conduct are prevalent among many companies in this era, though it could be argued that the presence of codes or a department specialising in ethics are mere artefacts of the drive to keep up with competitors in applying this fashionable concept, especially when consideration is given to the role that marketing/public relations departments play in this process. There are acknowledged gaps between policy (code) and practice, it has been suggested that ineffective ethics programmes and deficiencies in corporate culture are the cause (Webley and Werner, 2008). This also suggests that ethics is a bolt on to the normal function of business when it could be that *true* ethics interweaves everyday working life. The 'tone at the top' in other words management leading by example has an enormous impact on the embedding of ethics (Webley and Werner, 2008, Trevino et al, 1999).

A code of ethics (otherwise an ethical policy, code of conduct, statement of business practice or a set of business principles) can be a management tool for establishing and articulating the corporate values,



responsibilities, obligations, and ethical ambitions of an organisation and the way it functions. It provides guidance to employees on how to handle situations which pose a dilemma between alternative right courses of action, or when faced with pressure to consider right and wrong. No two codes will be the same. They must reflect the concerns of the employees of the particular organisation and the context of the relationships and business environment in which it operates.

(Institute of Business Ethics, 2007)

The idea of business ethics as a 'set of tools' to 'solve dilemmas' (Jones, 2003: 237) is critiqued as reducing ethics to a 'comfortable' place for executives. Jones (2003: 234) questions whether there can be 'constructed' a code of ethics, in emphasising that 'the idea of applying a formula would tend to efface the very idea of responsibility' as:

Knowing what to do, having a procedure to follow, or simply responding without experiencing undecidability is not the domain of ethics. Quite the opposite, it is the absence of decision, responsibility and anything worth the name of ethics.

Jones (2003:239)

When codes are constructed we may also need to question the underlying motivation for them. Jovanovic and Wood (2007:225) draw attention to 'exceptions' in ethics codes that 'decouple the ethical premise (e.g., accept no gifts) from actual action (e.g., accepting campaign contributions and certain meals, tickets, and parking)'. 'Decoupled policies' feature conflict between 'gesture' and 'action', whereas 'integrated policies' are congruent between 'ideals', 'leadership practices' and 'action' (Jovanovic & Wood, 2007:217). This tension between the decoupled and integrated creates ambiguity which may inspire higher ethical behaviour, provide more space for the Ethics board to be flexible, provide 'ground between the two' (ibid.p.233) and demands talking to others in order to decide the appropriate action to take:

The letter of the code makes the ideal seem unrealistic and the ideal makes the letter of the code seem less than ethical.

(Jovanovic & Wood, 2007:218)

The interplay between 'ideal', 'realistic' and 'ethical' create a space for questioning and debating and so those using the code have to be creative in responding to the ambiguity and unstable grounds that the code created:

Frustrated managers engaged in spontaneous dialogues about what to do, crafting ethical solutions tailored to the precise circumstances of the moment.

(Jovanovic & Wood, 2007:226)

While the custodians of the code used the 'free flowing' concept of the ideal to inspire rules which were more in keeping with the spirit of the code:

The relatively free flowing nature of the ideal allowed the Ethics board the room to interpret it in any ways that would narrow the space for unethical behaviour.

(Jovanovic & Wood, 2007:227)

Decoupled code design may be intentional; being a 'deliberate attempt by some to cast only the appearance of ethics in response to a series of scandals' (Jovanovic & Wood, 2007:225) or to be seen to be ethical by external parties. Some staff interpreted the exceptions in the code to be confirmation that the code was mere 'window dressing' (ibid), the potential of the code and the way in which it is constructed could encourage deliberation and contemplation over time through differing circumstances (Painter-Morland, 2008). Jones (2003, Jones et al, 2005) challenges the strategic or marketing approach of Corporate Social Responsibility, as was discussed earlier, by reminding us that giving in order to receive means calculating for our own interests, and rather than relating to the Other, economy takes over in which we only relate in order to reward ourselves. The other becomes of value in terms of what they can contribute (Jones et al, 2005). Jones (2003: 236) reminds us that:

By specifying ethics as a relation of openness to the Other, Levinas and Derrida offer a way of clarifying the responsibilities encoded in, or encrusted by, particular practices.

'Ethical decisions emerge out of dilemmas' that cannot be pre-empted by rules (Clegg et al, 2007: 112) and therefore codes of ethics can be seen as a 'public relations exercise' (Munro, 1992: 98) as in the case of Enron (Sims and

Brinkman, 2002). Clegg et al conclude that codes and rules are not completely superseded they may remain useful as a guide to employees with the freedom to choose and therefore have the space to 'reflect and deliberate'. Nevertheless a 'moral agent' is one who 'enacts agency' rather than one whose behaviour can be determined structurally (Lukes, 1974 cited by Clegg et al, 2007: 112). Jovanovic and Wood (2007) highlight the 'tension over what the Ethics Code is' in their research, is it a document to be followed to 'the letter of the code', or a more 'grand credo for the spirit of the code'? This debate may provide opportunities and openings to discuss the dimensions of codes and the underlying motivations and purpose of such codes.

There may be guidance provided for assessing how effective an ethics code is according to Webley (2006:39), he outlines 'symptomatic indicators' that can be developed for each stakeholder groups. For example, for employee stakeholders suggested indicators to be observed are staff turnover rates that differ from previous rates. Customer indicators may be 'frequency of recorded complaints increases and swiftness of response rates slow'. For each stakeholder relationship the indicator is inspecting and observing negative responses, that will impact on business performance and reputation, this approach portrays a rather detracting purpose for codes of conduct.

Similarly, the *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* report "Making Corporate Social Responsibility happen: The contribution of people management" (2005) reports on British American Tobacco:

BAT...is a very active campaigner against youth smoking...and believes that Corporate Social Responsibility is an essential and integral part of running a successful multinational business.

(CIPD, 2005:23)

However, a recent BBC documentary based in Mauritius, Malawi and Nigeria examined the selling practices of BAT, illuminating the practice of selling single cigarettes, painting shops in the colours of cigarette packaging and holding competitions and parties that are sponsored by the company, all of which are suggested to entice under-age youths to smoke.

BAT's own marketing code acknowledges that single cigarettes are particularly attractive to youth (who may not be able to afford a whole packet of cigarettes) and BAT claim that they do not encourage the sale of single sticks because it encourages youth access. Yet in Mauritius, Bannatyne discovers special pots which BAT have distributed to shops to make it easier for them to sell single cigarettes. In Malawi and Nigeria he discovers posters that BAT have produced depicting single cigarettes and showing the price of a single cigarette. He also meets children as young as 11 who are buying the single cigarettes and already developing a nicotine habit.

(Source: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2008/06\\_june/29/tobacco.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2008/06_june/29/tobacco.shtml))

BAT have responded to these accusations by questioning the objectivity of the documentary and citing a Nigerian journalist's article which outlines that the availability of single cigarettes when viewed from a Western perspective may be deplored, however, the spending habits of most African citizens are routinely small scale due to income availability and therefore the concept of whole-sale is quite foreign. They question whether single cigarettes are luring children and emphasise that if single cigarettes were not available from them, the gap would be plugged by competitors, a classic utilitarian style argument. There is little response in terms of the child, or children shown smoking in the documentary, the response could be seen as defensive and protectionist rather than genuine concern for the impact that BAT's business practices are having on the youth of these African nations. especially when considered in the light of the fact that selling individual cigarettes breaks BAT's own marketing code (Action on Smoking and Health, 2008)<sup>14</sup>.

Derrida reminds us that in response(ability) there is response and that 'responsibility without relation to an Other makes little sense' (Jones et al, 2005: 122). The rhetoric of international organizations may increasingly espouse awareness of ethical issues, but what kind of response is this? The response may be strategic and considered crucial to their success through reputation building, rather than questions being asked and deliberation taking place because it could be the *right* thing to do.

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<sup>14</sup> Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) compiled a research report entitled 'BAT's African Footprint' which was sponsored by Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

Codes of conduct are one way through which organizations attempt to consider and tackle relationships with the other. The corporation aims to indicate 'ethical intent' to stakeholders, while also giving guidance to employees and illuminating resolutions for messy ethical dilemmas. This approach reduces this messiness to a search for a formulae resolution and along the way loses some parts of this 'moral responsiveness' (Painter-Morland, 2008:4). How are others described in the code? Painter-Morland (2008:9) draws attention to the facelessness of the stakeholder, by contrasting contextualised stakeholders for example, mothers and fathers which provides a 'sense of the relational reality' with the naming of stakeholder groups as "employees", "customers" which may create distance and a void in which relationship is decontextualised, we return to this discussion later in the chapter.

As well as artefacts that have arisen in practice, there are established theoretical frameworks for Corporate Social Responsibility and a myriad of theoretical applications; normative (De George, 2008), legalistic (Friedman, 1970), strategic approaches in managing stakeholders (Freeman, 1984), moral/stewardship theory (Donaldson, 1997)<sup>15</sup>.

Archie Carroll's is one such frame which provides a categorisation of his perspective on the differing approaches available to companies.

#### **Archie Carroll (1991)**

*Economic responsibilities:* Be profitable for shareholders, provide good jobs for employees, produce quality products for customers.

*Legal responsibilities:* Comply with laws and play by rules of the game.

*Ethical responsibilities:* Conduct business morally, doing what is right just and fair, and avoiding harms.

*Philanthropic responsibilities:* Make voluntary contributions to society, giving time and money to good works.

Frameworks similarly to codes of conduct potentially provide stability and structure for practitioners. This pseudo stability aids the separation between role and person by applying rules and procedures, leading Solomon (1993:207)

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<sup>15</sup> Donaldson defines this as an organisation doing the right thing regardless of the affect on profit or the associated costs to the organisation.

to proclaim that 'there is something missing' that is key to business ethics; 'personal responsibility'. According to Jackall (2005: 359) bureaucracies rationalise behaviour of employees by separating decision from consequence, this 'insulation' increases 'rational decision making' and 'separates people from internal accountability for their actions'. Does this mean an unquestioning or perhaps a false security in following orders? Jones (2007:526) warns us that 'if we have the certainty that we are in the good, then it has slipped away' and according to Bauman (1993:80) the moral self is a self always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough.

In short, big organizations often seem to be vast systems of organized irresponsibility – even, perhaps especially, to those in them...since there is no necessary connection between the good of a particular individual, the good of an organization and the common good, every set of standards that leaders might assert is arbitrary to some extent and subject to constant negotiation and reinterpretation by competing organizational interests. Ethical issues often get translated into problems of public relations. Men and women thus often find themselves caught in an intricate set of moral mazes, unable even to discern the terms of their quandries, let alone a way out of the thicket.

(Jackall, 2005: 360)

There are ensuing debates in ethics regarding the interaction between individual and organizational levels of an organization, otherwise known as the idea of corporate moral personhood. How do we link the individual decisions with organizational culture? If decision making is about undecidability and not knowing what to do, then what does this mean for an organization?

Bauman (1993:81) suggests that:

Moral *practice* can have only *impractical* foundations. To be what it is – moral practice – it must set itself standards which it cannot reach. And it can never placate itself with self-assurances, or other people's assurances, that the standard has been reached. It is, ultimately, the lack of self-righteousness, and the self-indignation it breeds, that are morality's most indomitable ramparts.

### 3.2 Positions in the Corporate Social Responsibility Literature

In the Corporate Social Responsibility literature there can be perceived a paradigmatic war between the economic (shareholder) and social (stakeholder) perspectives of an organization's responsibilities, as is represented by Milton Friedman and Freeman respectively. Friedman, the Nobel-prize winning economist (1970) is best known for stating that responsibility is bound to profit first and foremost. Freeman (1984: 46) on the other hand extends the responsibilities of business to more than one party; stakeholders which are classified as 'any group or individual who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives'. Friedman's statement is positioned as the 'ground zero' (Jones, 2007: 514) in this set up dichotomy of the shareholder position and the stakeholder perspective, but in practice this distinction is imprecise as financial decisions impact on social goals (Harrison and Freeman, 1999). As Jones (2007: 512) suggests:

We have here a text that is more than a text, holding a determinate position of prestige; organizing and mobilizing so many theoretical and practical conceptions of what might be the responsibilities of business.

#### Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory is 'a set of propositions that suggest that managers of firms have obligations to some group of stakeholders' (Freeman, 2005: 496), the stakeholder framework indicates the *integration* of organizations in society, in contrast to *detached* from society (Pedersen, 2006). This wider position acknowledges the connections between companies and groups in society, and these relationships are recognised by terms used in the Corporate Social Responsibility literature, such as "participation", "inclusion", "voice", "involvement", "collaboration", "partnerships" and "engagement" (Pedersen, 2006:140). According to Freeman (2005) stakeholder theory has been understood as progressing along three differing paths. Firstly instrumental stakeholder theory (if a manager wants to increase the effectiveness of a company then stakeholders must be accounted for). Secondly descriptive research (discussing interactions between managers, companies and stakeholders) and thirdly a normative stakeholder theory that prescribes what a company should be doing in relation to stakeholders. However, Freeman (2005) condenses the first two approaches as an *analytical* approach to

stakeholder theory. The third approach is combined with a further approach; using “stakeholder” as a metaphor to think of the place that it plays in the wider corporate life, to construct a *narrative* approach to stakeholder theory. The analytical approach is made up of three parts; the rational level, process level and transactional level. The narrative approach may be ‘unpacked’ into a range of theories with normative cores, in order to explore how a manager should ‘act’ and how a company should be run (Freeman, 2005: 499).

The words used in the three parts of the analytical approach are suggestive as to the assumptions that may be present in this approach; ‘rational’, ‘process’, ‘transactional’. The use of these words constructs stakeholder theory as something that manages and controls stakeholders. This type of positivist stakeholder theory is challenged by the narrative approach which offers the choice as to which theory is being drawn on in order to examine what a corporation should be doing, for example, a feminist standpoint may be concerned with the principles of caring/connection and relationships (for example, Gilligan, 1982) which suggests that managers ought to ‘maintain and care for relationships and networks of stakeholders’ (Freeman, 2005: 500). How then does stakeholder theory translate into practice? The Institute of Business Ethics (Webley, 2006:42) categorises stakeholders into two categories; stakeholders and interested parties. Stakeholders are defined as ‘those groups with whom the company has a financial relationship in its day-to-day business’, for example, employees, suppliers, customers. ‘Interested parties’ are defined as ‘those often very influential groups with whom the organization may have dealings but where no direct financial relationship exists’, for example, media, NGOs, competitors. This approach may exemplify the instrumental stakeholder theory in practice, which separates the ‘financial’ stakeholders from those that do not have economic exchange, and so illuminates one position from stakeholder theory pitted against the opposing narrative approach. This supposed dichotomy simplifies the essence and purpose of stakeholder theory. There is more to be aware of which draws attention to the ambiguity and complexity that an organization often tackles, by considering several concerns from different stakeholders that are not essentially congruent and not necessarily agreed on between members of a particular stakeholder group, which can lead to “misrepresentations” and



“misinterpretations” if the interests of various stakeholders are narrowed to a partial resolution (Pedersen, 2006: 149).

We may deduce from the analytical, instrumental stakeholder approach that the stakeholder framework continues to cast Corporate Social Responsibility in a narrow and self-interested way. The potential though is present, it is the choices that are made by organizations that mark the Corporate Social Responsibility engagement and journey, and the narrative approach offers opportunities for ‘real’ stakeholder dialogue. Pedersen (2006:140-141) uses the work of Young and Torfing to outline a frame of reference for stakeholder dialogue, with five particular considerations. Firstly, “inclusion” of stakeholders in the decision making process, with questions surrounding which stakeholders to include based on level of importance and how to include them given limited resources. Secondly, “openness” of discussion, the impact or usefulness of the dialogue will be limited if there are narrow choices given to the participants rather than an open exchange taking place. Thirdly, “tolerance” to new ideas and “critical voices” which brings new perspectives for the company, if there are favoured ways of thinking such as “efficiency” and “profits” are more legitimate than “fairness” or “public good” then stakeholders whose perspectives are conducive with those that are accepted will be more likely to be listened to and favoured. Fourthly, “empowerment” is an essential ingredient that is affected by the potential impact of stakeholder participation on the dialogue stages (structure, process and outcome), with levels of “freedom” and “equality” suggesting corresponding degrees of “commitment” and “power” balances or imbalances. Fifthly, the scale of “transparency” is a significant part of the dialogue as without gaining “access to information” regarding the process and outcomes then it is impossible to hold companies accountable and to assess the extent of the exchange between ‘true’ participation and window dressing. These elements are drawn together by Pedersen to consider levels of engagement.

Even though the company attempts to break down the boundaries by engaging in a dialogue with stakeholders, it will inevitably create new boundaries by organizing the stakeholders and the dialogue.

(Pedersen, 2006:152)

### **Backlash against Corporate Social Responsibility**

Stoll (2007) alerts us to the backlash against Corporate Social Responsibility in the U.S mass media, she aligns the movements against Corporate Social Responsibility from the backdrop of the counter feminist movement. Arguing that it is facing this because of its potential, growing power, and buy in from most businesses, discussion centres around challenges to Corporate Social Responsibility through meaning (“fundamentally stripped of meaning”) and decisions (paralysis from seeing business decisions as ethical) (Stoll, 2007:18). She concludes by asserting that opponents are fighting the Corporate Social Responsibility tide with belief that they may be able to turn it.

### **3.3 Corporate Social Responsibility as Practice**

There has been much debate and discussion on the justification and business case for Corporate Social Responsibility. Despite prevalent questions in the literature and philosophical debates, there is a growing stream of contemporary literature which calls for less philosophising and more action (Clegg, Kornberger and Rhodes, 2007, Webley, 2006, CIPD, 2005, Velthouse and Kandogan, 2007, Pedersen, 2006, Jovanovic and Wood, 2007). In 2005, Dominique Be, the head of Corporate Social Responsibility for the European Commission at the time, declared that it was the point in time to operationalise theory through practice as the business case has been proven; “Our view is this: how do we do this in practical terms and move from philosophical words to actions?” (Czerny, 2005).

Godfrey and Hatch (2006) set forth their agenda for researching Corporate Social Responsibility in the twenty first century with a call for halting the focus on firms’ theoretical Corporate Social Responsibility and to start modelling an actual firms tangible Corporate Social Responsibility. In line with this call for practice, the core of this thesis is exploring Corporate Social Responsibility through organizational members’ meaning-making and investigation of the possible future approaches of the research organization. This focus on

meaning making in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility literature is evident in recent research; O'Dwyer (2002) using a narrative approach; Kakabadse and Rozuel (2006) outside the private sector; and Miles, Munilla & Darroch (2006) explore the framework of strategic conversations and philosophy.

Progress in our understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility must include theorizing around the micro-level processes practicing managers engage in when allocating resources toward social initiatives.

(Godfrey & Hatch, 2006: 87).

This perspective advocates a move away from theorising and is the anti-thesis of prescriptive models of business ethics as they 'fail to account for the choices and dilemmas that are central to its practice' (Clegg et al, 2007: 111). The deficiency of models to capture ethics in practice is postulated, firstly as such prescriptive direction removes moral agency from a person making a decision. Secondly, a plethora of models are available and therefore to choose the use of one may exclude another. Thirdly, in the eye of the storm that is practice there are situations arising that cannot be accounted for with a model and therefore there is always some judgement used in making the decision.

An ethics as practice approach as conceptualised by Clegg et al (2007: 116) embeds the prescriptive nature of rules to exploration of how 'formal' and 'informal' rules are put into practice. There is a focus on what organizations actually do about ethics as opposed to sole theoretical debate this highlights the 'context' of ethics and the cracks in practice, represented by dilemmas, mistakes and problems.

When ethics is something one does rather than something one has then, then this 'doing', organisationally, is enhanced by the opportunity for debate, discussion and pluri-vocal exchange and dialogue (Clegg et al, 2007: 117) and:

...when organizational members engage in discussions that turn away from the letter of an ethics code they often do so to address higher ethical principles embedded in the spirit of the code. The decoupled understanding of the code in these cases becomes a symbolic, legitimating gesture grounded not in strict provisions but in creative and complex interactions.

This leads to continual probing of the sufficiency of the ethical approach in an organization to circumstances which arise and change (Clegg et al, 2007), or in fact to everyday working practice. Moreover Clegg et al recommend constructive evaluation through conversations in 'ethical spaces', stating that ethics is practised when visible through openness, dialogue, and discussion. Though it is apparent that there is no scenario where employees will all agree, as 'ethics is always contested' (Clegg et al, 2007: 117), and therefore evolving, the very nature of the concept needs dynamism in order to exist.

Crane (1999) calls for an appreciation of meaning prior to measurement which he concedes is lacking in the positivist approach to researching ethics. Indeed he identifies the need to address ethical issues by understanding organizational members' perspectives as critical to attending to many of the most significant business ethics questions. Clegg et al (2007) supports this call for research with a contextual focus on embedding ethics and hence exploring 'local meaning' and 'sense-making practices'. It is hoped that this research may contribute through adopting an approach of a similar vein in exploring the complexity, chaos, real-life everyday experiences of organizational members.

In line with this call for practice, Jones et al (2005) in a move away from normative and instrumental approaches to Corporate Social Responsibility, calls for further inclusion of contemporary European philosophers in Business Ethics, such as Levinas and Derrida.

One might conclude that...in Corporate Social Responsibility we have almost nothing that has engaged with deconstruction and Derrida.  
(Jones, 2007: 519)

Engagement between Corporate Social Responsibility and Derrida offers an opportunity to consider the contradictions and tensions of this concept that embodies an 'oxymoronic' character with its relationship to profit, with the possibility of going beyond narrow, fixed responsibilities inherent in an

instrumental view of Corporate Social Responsibility towards responsibility that cannot be considered closed (Rendtorff, 2008).

### **3.4 Jacques Derrida**

Derrida's work is voluminous as are those that he draws on and have written of him. Derrida's impact or reach is extended to the following, as offered by Royle (2003); literary studies, philosophy, psychoanalysis, politics, history, religion, science, ethics, legal studies, technology, feminism and sexual difference, cultural studies, architecture, the 'university', postcolonialism, speech act theory, writing fiction and monstrosity.

In order to be aware of the discussions being performed in Derrida's works it may be necessary to include those that he drew on in his writings; Levinas, Heidegger, Marx, Freud, Patocka and Husserl among others. It would be impossible to attempt to summarise the linkages between these philosophers in this chapter, let alone Derrida's contribution to ethics. We shall therefore need to be selective by drawing on writings that discuss undecidability, aporia, hospitality, gift and responsibility. I shall also include briefly Levinas's relation to the Other.

Derrida's writings on ethics will be drawn on as a lens for illuminating the practice of ethics in the context that is being explored in this project. Derrida's writing was happened on rather than being a frame set from the outset of this work, his ideas offer both potential insights in Corporate Social Responsibility and 'grounds without grounds' (Jones, 2004:54).

### **Deconstruction**

Derrida is well known for his involvement with deconstruction. Deconstruction is somewhat controversial, the label was coined by Derrida in his early writings, the French word means; 'the grammatical re-arrangement of words in a sentence' or as a verb 'to dis-assemble' (Collins and Mayblin, 2005: 91). In Derrida's use deconstruction is not mere demolition as critics suggest but rather 'disordering' and 're-arranging' but in later years Derrida viewed the word as inadequate and somewhat negative. Derrida's work is dependent on 'host texts'

and doesn't 'oppose' or 'reject' but instead de-stabilises; drawing attention to the opposites in play and how they can be re-arranged.

The controversy comes about from deconstruction having contributed to a de-stabilising of the metaphysics or the realms of truth and reality as established in Western philosophy, including utilitarian, deontological and virtue ethics considered earlier, this de-stabilising has questioned and exposed the preference of speaking over writing through exploring Greek philosophy and considering the underlying attention given to presence over absence. This was controversial due to a perceived closing or one could say opening of a gap between philosophy and literature.

Deconstruction comes from the German *destruktio*n, destructuring is a term that Heidegger used, Derrida used this as a basis for the word deconstruction, it was a play on the situation of the time, and the ongoing debate between structuralists and non-structuralists (Jones et al, 2005) and questions around Logocentrism (to hold something at the centre), Jones (2004) outlines Derrida's challenge to this as in order to hold something centre there has to be something else off centre.

Jones (2004: 54; Jones 2007) suggests that deconstruction could be extended to a range of 'empirical texts' from organizational life. How is this to be approached when faced with the difficulties of applying such negative definitions? Or not applying, as in Derrida's works it is clear that deconstruction is not to be applied in any conventional sense.

Deconstruction is not a philosophy or a method, it is not a phrase, a period or a moment. (Derrida, 1999: 65)

In *letter to a Japanese friend* Derrida (1988:2-3) gives an account of this word deconstruction:

Deconstruction is neither an *analysis* nor a *critique* and its translation would have to take that into consideration.

De-construction therefore is not a mode of analysis as deconstruction resists moves towards simple elements or critique as usually critique takes a position outside the object but deconstruction questions the inside/outside distinction and in a poetic allusion to deconstruction Derrida tells us that he's loved every text he has ever worked with. Deconstruction as method is also resisted by Derrida as it would lead to *deconstructionism*, Derrida resists the idea of the 'ism', as each text requires a different type of connecting. In a *Letter to a Japanese friend* Derrida (1988:2) also considers the possibility of models of deconstruction:

It goes without saying that if all the significations enumerated by the *Littre* [original emphasis] interested me because of their affinity with what I "meant" ["*vouloir-dire*"], they concerned, metaphorically, so to say, only models or regions of meaning and not the totality of what deconstruction aspires to at its most ambitious. This is not limited to a linguistico-grammatical model, nor even a semantic model, let alone a mechanical model. These models themselves ought to be submitted to a deconstructive questioning. It is true then that these "models" have been behind a number of misunderstandings about the concept and word of deconstruction because of the temptation to reduce it to these models.

Deconstruction may not be a project if the outcome is pre-determined; 'a goal which predetermines it's movements would govern foundationally'. This last point is important for this project due to the serendipitous connection that came about which led to a connection with Derrida's work.

If there is nothing outside of the text – a much misunderstood phrase – how do we move from the text, understood in the broad sense, to action? (Derrida, 1999: 65)

We have discussed what deconstruction is not considered to be, what then can or may it be? Jones (2007: 519) informs us that deconstruction questions 'what holds one thing apart from another' and considers the 'border' and 'frame'. This is not 'rejecting all boundaries' but instead 'working against the assumption of a division of the inside from the outside by showing, documenting, and demonstrating the instability of specific boundaries'. Jones work embodies deconstruction in organization studies and Corporate Social Responsibility, the subtle nuances of his arguments are illustrated and weaved rather than boldly presented. A similar question is asked by Coe and Beadle (2008) in a paper

entitled, *Could we know a practice-embodiment institution if we saw one?* They consider how to undertake empirical research drawing on MacIntyre's work, and consider the connections between philosophy; 'the tradition that informs and enables the thinking that takes place in it' and the 'ethical imperative that cannot be contained in it and yet cannot be spoken [of] without it' (Painter-Morland, 2008:3). They are able to set out the possibilities for their work at the early stages of their project however in this case there are intrinsic difficulties in taking a similar approach by framing this work or 'applying' deconstruction.

Deconstruction is therefore not so much a matter of calling into question all boundaries as it is of showing how this or that boundary does or does not hold.

(Jones, 2007: 520)

Deconstruction differs from critique in being a process through which to explore texts and change them in an affirmative way (Jones, 2004), for example, in breaking down dichotomies and using a dialectical approach (Jones 2007b).

### **Undecidability**

In terms of ethics, Derrida makes it clear that only in conditions of undecidability a real ethical situation is faced. In Derrida's recent work is 'the suggestion that ethics and responsibility do not involve perfect and clear knowledge and absence of such decision-making difficulties, but are themselves emergent in and even defined by the experience of double-binds such as these' (Jones, 2004: 53). We may then question the prevalence of codes of conducts in organizations, which suggest a clear path to resolving ethical situations, and could surmise that this clear path lacking in difficulties leads to something in the name of responsibility which lacks the ability to bear that name.

Related to this is the idea of aporia, 'an irresolvable contradiction between demands that pulls us' in both directions; (Jones, 2004: 53) a situation of undecidability; double-bind; not knowing where to go. In order for there to be decision there also needs to be indecision, the idea of the presence or trace of indecision in decision, as without decision there cannot be indecision.



There would be no decision in the strong sense of the word, in ethics, in politics, no decision, and thus no responsibility, without the experience of undecidability. If you don't experience some undecidability then the decision would simply be the application of a programme, the consequence of a premiss or of a matrix. So a decision has to go through some impossibility in order for it to be a decision. If we knew what to do, if I knew in terms of knowledge what I have to do before the decision, then the decision would not be a decision.

(Derrida, 1999: 66)

Derrida uses the example of Hamlet who is paralysed by un-decidability, while illustrating that he may be seen as a 'paradigm for action'; as he has understanding of the possible actions and is going through the undecidability at the beginning of the decision (Derrida, 1999: 68). Contrast that with the example of Abraham and Isaac used by Derrida, Jones (1993:16) questions whether a responsible decision was made by Abraham when choosing between his god and his son, as the calm, quick and quiet manner with which the dilemma was resolved leads one to question whether Abraham had endured a 'sort of non-passive endurance of the *aporia* [which] was the condition of responsibility and decision'.

Decision, an ethical or a political responsibility, is absolutely heterogeneous to knowledge. Nevertheless, we have to know as much as possible to ground our decision. But even if it is grounded in knowledge, the moment I take a decision it is a leap, I enter a heterogeneous space and that is the condition of responsibility. This is not only a problem but the *aporia* we have to face constantly. For me, however, the *aporia* is not simply paralysis, but the *aporia* or the *non-way* is the condition of walking: if there was no *aporia* we wouldn't walk, we wouldn't find our way; path-breaking implies *aporia*. This impossibility to find one's way is the condition of ethics.

(Derrida, 1999: 73)

For the aporetic experience to be unfulfilled is to deny the 'Other' and to deny 'the troubling and critical aspect of ethics' (Jones et al, 2005:145). What is the Other? Derrida draws on Levinas's emphasis on one's relationship to the 'other' and the distinction between small o; other and big O; Other, which emphasises the Other being engaged in contrast to the other. There is also a distinction in translation; *autrui* meaning a specific Other, in contrast to *autre* which is a more general other.

The Levinasian interruption of the ethical tradition is not simply to assert the primacy of ethics, but to refigure the meaning of ethics. For Levinas, the question of the relation to the Other is ultimately an ethical question, *the* question of ethics. (Jones, 2003:227)

In order to provide some words on the Other in their glossary Jones et al (2005:169) tell us what the Other is not:

The Other is not the same. The Other is not reducible. The Other is not identical to anything. The Other is not enclosable. The Other is not me even if it makes me. The Other takes me away from what I am. The Other discomforts. Without discomfort, I have probably reduced the Other to something I know something the same as me. The Other, therefore, is not merely Other than radically Other.

Derrida notes the particular difficulties of answering to more than one 'other' in the *Gift of Death*. Responsibility if it is to involve a genuine response to the Other, involves at least a certain element of not knowing who to respond to, not knowing how to respond and not knowing if your actions have been responsible (Jones et al, 2005: 123).

Saying that a responsible decision must be taken on the basis of knowledge seems to define the condition of possibility of responsibility (one who can't make a responsible decision without science or conscience, without knowing what one is doing, for what reasons, in view of what and under what conditions), at the same time as it defines the condition of impossibility of this same responsibility (if decision making is relegated to a knowledge that it is content to follow or develop, then it is no more a responsible decision, it is the technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus, the simple mechanistic deployment of a theorem). This aporia of responsibility would thus define the relation between the Platonic and Christian paradigms throughout the history of morality and politics.

(Derrida, 1995: 24)

According to Derrida (1995:24) the possibility of decision making becoming 'simple' and 'mechanistic' and therefore irresponsible may be challenged by a more dynamic, conscious awareness of what responsibility means and requires.

In order to be responsible it is necessary to respond to or answer to what being responsible means. For if it is true that the concept of responsibility has, in the most reliable continuity of its history, always

implied involvement in action, doing, a *praxis*, a *decision* that exceeds simple conscience or simple theoretical understanding, it is also true that the same concept requires a decision or responsible action to answer for itself *consciously*, that is, with knowledge of a thematics of what is done, of what action signifies, its causes, its ends etc. In debates concerning responsibility one must always take into account this original and irreducible complexity that links theoretical consciousness (which also must bethetic or themantic consciousness) to “practical” conscience (ethical, legal, political), if only to avoid the arrogance of so many “clean consciences.” We must continually remind ourselves that some part of irresponsibility insinuates itself wherever one demands responsibility without sufficiently conceptualizing and thematizing what “responsibility” means; *that is to say everywhere*. One can say *everywhere*...

(Derrida, 1995:25).

Derrida contests the obvious dichotomy of decision and undecidability explaining that rather than one being outside of the other, to not have made a decision, to be unsettled, and unresolved is a part of deciding, that in any decision taken with responsibility there is an experience of undecidability.

Ethics and politics...start with undecidability. I am in front of a problem and I know that the two predetermined solutions are as justifiable as one another. From that point, I have to take responsibility which is heterogeneous to knowledge. If the decision is simply the final moment of a knowing process, it is not a decision. So the decision first of all has to go through a terrible process of undecidability, otherwise it would not be a decision, and it has to be heterogeneous to the space of knowledge. If there is a decision it has to go through undecidability and make a leap beyond the field of theoretical knowledge. So when I say I don't know what to do, this is not the negative condition of decision. It is rather the possibility of a decision.

(Derrida, 1999: 66)

Royle (2003, 92) explains that *aporia* can be loosely defined as ‘doubt’ or ‘difficulty in choosing’, more particularly a ‘no way’; an ‘interminable experience’ (Derrida, 1993: 16). An *aporia* is an ‘irresolvable internal contradiction’, which originates from the Greek *aporos* meaning ‘impassable’ (Oxford English dictionary). Derrida uses the phrase ‘not knowing where to go’ (Derrida, 1993:16).

Such an experience must remain such if one wants to think, to make come or to let come any event of decision or of responsibility. The most general and therefore most indeterminate form of this double and single duty is that a responsible decision must obey an ‘it is necessary’ that owes nothing, it must obey a *duty that knows nothing, that must owe*

*nothing in order to be a duty*, [original emphasis] a duty that has no debt to pay back, a duty without debt and therefore without duty.  
(Derrida, 1993:16)

Derrida (1999:70) discusses the relationship between hospitality and gift, and the idea of unconditional hospitality, which breaks the 'circle' of exchange that is present with an expected guest. 'Pure hospitality' is a surprise, not expecting anything in return or exchange; 'an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be'. A true gift is to give without receiving. The 'gifts' which are given by corporations may be scrutinised in the light of this.

Questions that are suggested by Jones (2007:523) in connecting Corporate Social Responsibility and Derrida provide some direction for this work; If Corporate Social Responsibility is already in deconstruction, does it have any need for Derrida? How many of the current impasses of responsibility in Corporate Social Responsibility can be clarified by reading Derrida? Might Derrida enable us to think of responsibility differently?

Deconstruction may aid understanding not of which of the two positions to prioritize, but instead to query the so-called foundation of the set up. For instance, the binaries of good and bad, when re-read in the context of Friedman's earlier writings contest this opposition (Jones, 2007). In fact as Jones (2007:517) shows through this example of Friedman; 'there is a lot more going on than is typically acknowledged in Corporate Social Responsibility'. Thus recognizing the 'movement', 'slippage', 'conflict' and 'contradiction' of which there is a trace, but which may not be easily seen. Hence suggesting that in Corporate Social Responsibility, these very elements need to be explored and acknowledged due to the inherent 'impossibility', 'radical undecidability' and 'lack of coherence' (Jones, 2007:527) in Corporate Social Responsibility.

Jones (2003:234) suggests beginning with the question why? What interest does a business have in 'being ethical'? This pertinent question has an important relevance when we discuss Corporate Social Responsibility in societal sectors later in this chapter.

## Why Derrida?

DeGeorge (2008) asks such a question in his paper entitled: 'An American perspective on corporate social responsibility and the tenuous relevance of Jacques Derrida'. His direct challenge to the work of Jones and others in their writings on Derrida, is tied up with the practice of ethics. DeGeorge argues that Western philosophers such as Kant, widely known and applied to Corporate Social Responsibility in the United States, provide a basis through which decisions can be made. He highlights that the 'undecidability' of Derrida's work may be an issue for managers who need to make decisions and be assured and supported with ethical rules or codes, in order to be sure about making the 'right' decision. This draws us to Jones' observation that codes of conduct may place managers in a 'comfortable' position which is deceptively simple. Alongside the responsibility of managerial position lies difficulty and ethics drawing on Derrida would suggest that these difficulties are a necessary endurance that having such responsibility entails, to simplify, this would be seen as irresponsible. 'Although Corporate Social Responsibility concerns are not restricted to the top management and are the responsibility of each individual in the organization, the leadership challenge is to create a climate in which everyone feels responsible and accountable for Corporate Social Responsibility dialogue' (Kakabadse and Rozuel, 2006:91).

DeGeorge (2008:81) poses questions that are of interest to any study drawing on Derrida: What can we do with Derrida's categories that we cannot do without them? How well does the proposed reform of the terms 'ethics' and 'ethical' cohere with our moral experiences? (ibid.p.84)

The questions posed above apply concrete limits to Derrida's potential contribution to ethics, looking at the dichotomy of "can do" and "cannot do". Perhaps this is to be expected considering DeGeorge's argument for more pragmatic business ethics drawing on philosophy to help provide answers for practising managers. The second question is of interest and may provide some insights.

And this is one of the things that deconstruction teaches: a radical recognition of limits, an awareness of vulnerability (of the subject and the

Other), and a recognition that limits do not stop us but rather enable us to act.

Jones (2003:18)

### **3.5 Corporate Social Responsibility Research in practice**

We may consider how Derrida links to practice, and so we will turn to work that has been conducted, that is broadly similar to this research project. A number of studies have engaged with Corporate Social Responsibility in differing contexts, and explored the messiness of Corporate Social Responsibility in practice.

#### **Corporate Social Responsibility Engagement**

Cramer et al (2004a:215) report on a Dutch research project that involved eighteen companies participating in the 'Dutch National Initiative for Sustainable Development' with the aim of moving from 'financial to sustainable profit'. Representatives of each company taking part in the programme were also the change agent for each company and therefore responsible for selling the benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility to management and employees. In their preliminary paper Cramer et al (ibid) discuss the process in which the companies were engaged, and focus on the meaning making of change agents aiming to develop their companies' understanding and approach to Corporate Social Responsibility. This insight is provided solely through the lens of the change agents and does not include data from other members of the organizations taking part in the project. Through data collected during the programme and subsequent in-depth interviews with the change agents, Cramer et al (ibid), explore the change agents' role in inspiring change and hence the construction of Corporate Social Responsibility in an organizational setting.

The change agents had varying backgrounds in their companies ranging from working in a specialised department to membership of the board of directors. Cramer et al found that the change agent:

'...translated their intentions regarding Corporate Social Responsibility into language and actions and in acting in such a way they structured their own views of the issue(s) involved'. (2004a:216)

It is clear from their discussion that the approach taken by each change agent in engaging their company differed. This is consistent with the varied meanings of Corporate Social Responsibility collected from the research participants; and is therefore context specific. The main factors influencing the Corporate Social Responsibility strategy employed by each agent are outlined as: individual change agents' personality and the organizational culture. Both factors combined to craft the perceived appropriate strategy in selecting the best means through which to communicate the Corporate Social Responsibility message to members of their organization. Language choices were found to be of particular significance to the change agents' role as the selection of vocabulary used impacted greatly on the acceptance or compatibility of the messages being given. Organizational culture particularly dictated appropriate vocabulary in the specific context, as for example, organizational specialisms, past history and current practices that fitted in the Corporate Social Responsibility strategy all bore significant relevance to the unfolding communication strategy.

In the discussion of the actual process that occurred in the organizations, the metaphor of Corporate Social Responsibility as a jigsaw puzzle was used, this summed up the observation that the process was muddled and messy, yet was evolving and coming together piece by piece. Arguing that 'making sense of the specific meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility in an organizational context is a process that takes time' (Cramer et al, 2004a:218), with the observation that:

By carrying out concrete activities and reflecting on its contributions to the broader Corporate Social Responsibility perspective, a company can gradually develop a focused view of Corporate Social Responsibility, shared by its members. Only then Corporate Social Responsibility gets a company specific meaning with respect to its emotional, functional or practical value.

We could question the 'focussed view' as a managed, narrow conception of Corporate Social Responsibility which O'Dwyer refers to as 'Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>2</sup>'. According to Martin (1995), we may also query the 'shared' element in light of Martin's three cultural perspectives.

In a separate study, Cramer et al (2004b), find that contrary to the popular notion of applying Corporate Social Responsibility 'the process of embedding Corporate Social Responsibility in a specific context [...] is a rather messy affair'. They put forward a four-step process for organizations engaging with Corporate Social Responsibility: first, sensitising; second, discovering; third, embedding; and fourth, routinising; with embedding being more strategic and gaining bottom-line advantages. The fourth step, routinising, is defined as the time when Corporate Social Responsibility becomes a 'natural' part of decision making. This is predicted by the authors whose project is identified as being at the second step, therefore routinising is not empirically observed, and so is not necessarily the end stage.

This disarray is acknowledged by Cramer et al (2004a), as a situation which business practitioners need to get used to. Cramer et al (2004b), discuss the changing place of the agent and the impact that the role has on the Corporate Social Responsibility journey.

### **Reflection on Corporate Social Responsibility engagement**

O'Dwyer (2002) highlights engagement with organizations, from the perspective of social accountants, as having possible detrimental effects as well as positive changes. His paper discusses two conceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility: labelled Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>1</sup> and Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>2</sup>. Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>1</sup> is defined as normative, consisting of a balance of obligations and voluntary action by organization, with a reading of business and ethics being "interwoven" (O'Dwyer, 2002:527).

Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>2</sup> has an operational, pragmatic approach with management of that which 'predominantly [had been] treated as a social and/or ethical issue'. The movement of Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>1</sup> to Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>2</sup> downgrades Corporate Social Responsibility to a much narrower meaning, paving the way for business to decide its level of engagement with social issues and give clear priority to economic aspects. Thereby Corporate Social Responsibility becomes 'manageable' with the tension between economic and social aspects evaporating. This notion is labelled 'managerial capture'. O'Dwyer's (2002:539) research explored this by



interviewing twenty-nine Irish executives/managers. He found that as well as management capturing and controlling the debate on Corporate Social Responsibility practice, the research data also illuminated ‘pockets of resistance’ to this narrow conception.

One element of this manifested itself in a clear division between some interviewees’ personal reactions to the Corporate Social Responsibility debate and the acknowledged need to adopt a corporate reaction. It was evident that some of the managers interviewed preferred to keep their personal beliefs “outside” the organization due to pressures in the workplace (e.g. workload and time) and their need to survive in the corporate world, MacIntyre (1977,1979) calls this compartmentalisation.

There has been a predominance of research exploring managerial perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility (O’Dwyer, 2002). This focus reflects the impact that managerial positions have on the culture of an organization and therefore the ability to inform opinion (O’Dwyer, 2002). This was emphasised in smaller companies especially where structural constraints may not be as pervasive. It was also found that one participant, disgruntled by the prominence given to management in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, was calling for employees to become involved and initiate a bottom-up or grassroots approach. There was also a strong defensive reaction to Corporate Social Responsibility and its relevance to the corporate sector; as some participants argued that Corporate Social Responsibility applied to all sectors of society, not just the private sector (O’Dwyer, 2002).

In a separate paper, O’Dwyer (2004:8) discusses stakeholder democracy, engagement mechanisms and accountability in the context of social accounting. Wherein the *managing of* (or the notion of) Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>2</sup> has taken precedent over *accounting to* or *full engagement with* stakeholders:

Win-win conceptions of stakeholder/organizational interactions are deemed reflective of concerns to manage ‘relevant’ stakeholders as opposed to accounting to broad stakeholder groups.

(O’Dwyer, 2004:8)

Hence mutually beneficial interactions with stakeholders are enacted by choosing and managing those that are 'relevant', as opposed to being open to all stakeholders, especially those that do not impact on organizational success, but rather are impacted on by the organization.

### **Ethical decision making**

Davies and Crane (2003) set their research in the context of the fair trade move to commercialisation, from that of a solely charitable endeavour to the inclusion of private companies selling fair trade products. Their paper is located in the context of a private sector profit-orientated fair trade company and investigates how the company sustains its espoused principles. They do this through looking at ethical decision making in a new context in a single case study, as there are few studies specific to fair-trade companies that have an ethical mission.

Discussion of ethical decision making models, draws on Thompson (1995:185), who calls for a 'contextualised position in which ethical decision making is observed as a "multi faceted social process that entails interpretations regarding the nature of the ethical issue, a corresponding definition of the community at concern, and the recognition (or overlooking) of various, and potentially competing stakeholder interests".'

Davies and Crane found that there were two key types of issues faced at Day (the case organization): firstly, the suitability of who to do business with, and secondly, how to manage partners and other stakeholders. The paper shows that there is some deliberation over the first issue, for example, whether to sell their, Day's, chocolate bars in Shell outlets, and conflicts of interest arise between the first and second points. There was also the notion of a 'company ethic' (Davies and Crane, 2003:14), which overrides individuals' feelings on particular issues e.g. advertising to children.

The concept of the 'moral curtain' was introduced in the paper to convey a point at which members of the organization consciously did not deliberate or think about supply and production, due to conditions being stable and covered by

Fair Trade guidelines. Therefore members felt that there was no need for ethical reflection. However, Davies and Crane share their concern that as the company becomes more commercial the inconsistencies in decisions may increase as more precedents are set that while favouring chocolate growers might be dubious on other fronts, e.g. selling in Shell outlets. The precedents can be used by organization members to support very differing ideas of what is an ethically accepted decision. The moral intensity of each decision therefore is not fixed, and is influenced by organizational history, with different circumstances bringing differing results. A 'moral curtain which divided certainty from uncertainty' (Davies and Crane, 2003:20) seemed to be in place near the supply side, so that decisions that were made tended to put the suppliers needs as priority.

### **Meaning/sense making in Relation to Corporate Social Responsibility**

Two studies are to be included in this section. The first explores meaning making in one public sector organization in a healthcare context. The second discusses Corporate Social Responsibility sense-making from a programme initiated with eighteen private sector companies.

The first study by Kakabadse and Rozuel (2006) was set in a French hospital, during the reorientation of the public sector towards business, with its accompanying public policy move from "social good" to "economic good" from "welfare state" to "competitive state" (Cerney, 1990). This work explores the stakeholder model through a local hospital, with the aim of appreciating the stakeholder groups understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The use of the term "corporate" when referring to a public hospital may appear inappropriate, but the growing pressure on public establishments, in all sectors, to improve their economic profitability at least, as much as their public service performance, makes a parallel with a profit making organization coherent.

(Kakabadse & Rozuel, 2006:78)

Dialogue was identified by Kakabadse and Rozuel as a key issue which stakeholders believed to be necessary. In particular open dialogue with people other than in councils was deemed important, especially exchanges with the local community. Leadership is also acknowledged as a crucial element

specifically in 'promoting' and 'supporting' Corporate Social Responsibility. This emphasis has been prominent among internal and external stakeholders indicating that leadership may be a vital aspect in Corporate Social Responsibility. In this context four factors were identified as impacting on leadership: personality; power games and politics; managers' behaviour; and lack of training. This led to a perceived 'weak leadership', which resulted in communication breakdowns between managers and staff and impacted on the culture of the hospital.

The quality of leadership is seen by all stakeholders as critical in implementing and fostering an open dialogue involving multiple stakeholders since they can be an effective interface between internal and external stakeholders. Similarly, a well-functioning dialogue can enhance leaders' position in and outside the organization.

(ibid. p.90)

It was found that stakeholders hold corresponding views on the necessary social responsibilities of the hospital, this implies that stakeholders, rather than differing on the social responsibilities, may have differing perspectives on the prioritisation of them. Interestingly, employees and external stakeholders had a closer understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility in the hospital, than that connecting senior management and employees. These findings point towards dialogue as being 'at the heart' of 'stakeholder management' and highlight the 'responsibility of leadership' in promoting social responsibilities in the organization.

(ibid. p.91).

Similarly, to the research project discussed below, research findings substantiate Corporate Social Responsibility as a process, not as a rigid set of goals but as an evolving 'continuous process of negotiation with stakeholders over time' (ibid. p.92). The contextual nature of the concept is also highlighted as 'Corporate Social Responsibility is interpreted differently by different people, based on their own experience and their understanding of the context and the stakes' (ibid. p.92).

In the second study of this meaning making section Cramer et al (2004a) discuss their participants' engagement with Corporate Social Responsibility

from the early stages of introducing the concept to each company. At this stage employees and stakeholders were unsure how to engage with Corporate Social Responsibility and uncertain of its 'role' and 'consequences' while having reason to be searching for what Corporate Social Responsibility may mean to them. Drawing on Weick's (1995) framework (outlined later in this chapter) there are two key causes for sense-making: uncertainty and ambiguity. Cramer et al (2004a) ascribe participants' uncertainty to a lack of information and their confusion and ambiguity to receiving too much information.

The mental process that is of importance in the case of Corporate Social Responsibility is directed at the creation of a common, context bound view on the values and starting points of Corporate Social Responsibility. People create a collective frame of reference by sharing meaning with each other.

(Cramer et al, 2004a:4)

In this project one representative from each of the eighteen companies participated in a programme run by the researchers. This entailed monthly meetings at which planned discussions, focusing on operationalising Corporate Social Responsibility, took place and opportunities to meet external stakeholders were available. This chance for dialogue with other representatives became a forum to explore Corporate Social Responsibility as an experience, and construct what the concept meant in their particular context. The representative then took the role of 'change agent' in their organization with the task of translating the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility into laypersons terms, and fitted in the specific organizational setting. The change agent then reflected on how to gain momentum and support for Corporate Social Responsibility, with discussion internally about the potential application for Corporate Social Responsibility. The agent then planned concrete activities and opportunities for employees to engage. It is clear from this paper that finding what suited each organization was important, as one of the change agent's remarked:

We look for a reason to do something: what is our interest? What do we do, why and what suits us?

(ibid. p.10)

This meant being aware of organizational strengths and areas which would have a connection with the work of the company, for example:

We have analysed several times whether we wanted to involve environmental issues in our Corporate Social Responsibility activities, but decided the subject would be too delicate. It would take too much energy to change the mindset in this area [...] we focus primarily on people; we are a service provider. Therefore we deal here with people. We want to offer our personnel education and motivation through external societal programmes.

(ibid)

How can we assess the impact that Corporate Social Responsibility now has in the organization? The annual reports of the participating companies presented greater awareness and emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility, but perhaps of most interest is the process that the organizations encountered. This research project highlights the processual nature in sense making and meaning making in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility, as each change agent acknowledged that 'their view on the meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility had changed over the period of time'

(ibid. p.14)

Cramer et al (2004a) conclude with an overview of the process through which the organizational engagement occurred. Firstly, through 'introducing a diffuse sensitivity to Corporate Social Responsibility' (ibid. p.21), followed by an increase in awareness of the significance Corporate Social Responsibility could have for the organization, action then ensued by appointing a representative to co-ordinate activities. This representative named the 'change agent' may take a number of steps including: translating theory into practice with input from others to direct priorities, followed by focussing on the issues that have been selected and gaining feedback on the direction; introduce actions, learn from the process and embed Corporate Social Responsibility in the systems of the organization.

This process seems precise and definite, alongside these potential steps we need to consider that 'understanding the specific meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility in an organization is a time-consuming process' (ibid. p.22) and that understanding can be developed through taking action and reflecting on the contribution made

### 3.6 Culture

A practical aim for an organization interested in the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility would be to explore current culture and values (Lingard, 2006) as practice-based business ethics require a focus on 'deep' cultural integration; embedded in the behaviours of employees instead of 'cultural artefacts'; stand alone Corporate Social Responsibility departments, codes of conducts etc. (Sims and Brinkmann, 2003: 243; Webley, 2006). The Enron scandal of 2001 is a powerful example used widely in Corporate Social Responsibility literature. Enron had been hailed as a role model for Corporate Social Responsibility, and so the financial scandal and company collapse that ensued instigated many enquiries. In the aftermath, the Enron culture has been the focus of attention, with recognition that the heavy reliance on status and high rewards meant that the ends (or goals) justified any means (Sims and Brinkmann, 2003). Sims and Brinkmann explore and discuss this infamous case through the use of Schein's framework; Enron while 'talking the talk' of Corporate Social Responsibility was certainly not 'walking the walk'. In keeping with the issues that this infamous case highlights, this research argues that culture plays an integral part in the implementation of an organizational Corporate Social Responsibility approach.

Culture is key to understanding the context that decisions are made in (Crane, 1999)

Cultural studies originated in anthropology (for example, Hallowell, 1955; Geertz, 1973) where there are diverse conceptions of its meaning. This continues with Joanne Martin (2002) identifying continuing debates and exposes some of the apparent divides among culture researchers which she labels 'culture wars' these are based around the distinctions of; objective/subjective, etic/emic, generalizable/context specific, focus and breadth and level of depth.

When transported into the field of organization studies Smircich's oft-cited paper (1983) charted a variety of ways in which the concept had been applied. She divided these into five categories: Cross cultural management; corporate culture; organizational cognition; organizational symbolism; and unconscious

processes and organization. Each strand drew on differing epistemological traditions; the first two approaches (the modernist and functional) view culture as a tool, for the benefit of management with the aim of cultural manipulation to enhance performance and success (Hatch, 1997). The remaining three drew on culture as a root metaphor with a 'view of organizations as expressive forms, manifestations of human consciousness' (Smircich, 1983:347). Each strand of cultural tradition is marked as much by the purpose which drives it as the method chosen to achieve that purpose (Smircich, 1983). There are a number of distinctions that mark out each cultural tradition, as discussed below.

The etic-emic debate is a theoretical discussion of the merits of research conducted as an outsider (etic) over that of an insider (emic). It is a debate reflecting wider positions on objectivity and subjectivity. Geertz (1973) notes the difficulties in finding an emic position without an element of the etic pervading and therefore suggests a balance between etic and emic which attains insights without imprisonment of the world under scrutiny and yet maintains the distinctiveness of that world. This tension between the emic and etic could be re-cast in the light of Derrida's work as an inevitability, as without one the other would not exist and therefore there cannot be a truly emic position as an emic positioning relies on etic. Geertz's proposal of balancing recognises this dichotomy.

However, culture research today is not necessarily located in tribes of the Amazon rainforest, and so the etic-emic balance is rather more complex for researchers (Martin, 2002) especially those that are doing "halfie research" which is "research conducted by a researcher who comes from the culture she studies, but who, during the work, is a member of another culture, that 'commissioned' the research project" (Czarniawska, 1998:4).

In the debate of whether research aims for generalizable or context-specific work, Martin (2002) draws on a quotation from Blake: 'seeing the world in a grain of sand' when providing a thick description. However, Geertz (1973) in his well-known context-specific description of life in a Balinese village used his insights to inform him of the collective of the village. Hence, the distinction between these two types of focus can also be blurred, as Geertz uses thick



description to generalize to a small extent. Though symbolic researchers immerse themselves in the 'experiences' and 'meanings' of members in a culture, their perspective is ultimately wider than the single member; with the aim of a 'delicate amalgamation' of the meanings across the organization (Hatch, 1997:218).

Here again we find culture conceived as a root metaphor; a lens for studying organizational life (Martin, 2002; Smircich, 1983). This approach views culture as something an organization *is* rather than something an organization *has* (Smircich, 1983). Moreover the use of a root metaphor approach gives a less static status to the concept of culture and therefore allows 'room for ambiguity' (ibid. p.347). A symbolic perspective, established by Geertz and other anthropologists such as Hallowell (1955) focuses on symbols and meanings that are shared in a culture, in order to gain understanding a researcher examines the process through which interaction gains meaning in the site, attention is placed on relationships, symbol systems and meanings (ibid. p.353), and so:

[The] organizational world exists only as a pattern of symbolic relationships and meanings sustained through the continued processes of human interaction. Social action is considered possible because of consensually determined meanings for experience. (ibid.)

And so, the cultural approach adopted has developed to also 'capture the complexities' which Martin includes in the following definition:

A cultural observer is interested in the surfaces of cultural manifestations because details can be informative, but he or she also seeks an in-depth understanding of the patterns of meaning that link these manifestations together, sometimes in *harmony*, sometimes in bitter *conflicts* between groups, and sometimes in webs of *ambiguity*, *paradox* and *contradiction*.  
(Martin, 2002:3)

The ambiguity, paradox and contradiction elements of the above definition may link with Derrida's conditions of undecidability, as a place in which there is a time of unclear and chaotic experience. There are certain implicit assumptions that may be claimed to underpin this path by the established culture literature: firstly, viewing the world as subjective rather than objective; secondly, in

contrast to neo-positivist studies, interpretative studies focus on exploring the detail of context, with the aim of uncovering context-related understanding in place of theory generalisability (Martin, 2002:6). This approach is succinctly expressed by Smircich (1983:353):

Meaning is dependant on the context in which artefacts and symbols are encountered and this context is what they refer to as culture.  
(Hatch, 2006:192)

Symbolic researchers use the term 'contextualising', which encourages exploring artifacts and symbols in the 'situations' and 'locations' that are their natural setting (ibid. p.193), whereas modernists' approach is 'decontextualised' in order to achieve generalisability (Hatch, 1997:232).

### **3.6.1 Cultural Perspectives**

From the outset I defined culture in line with Smircich as:

[...] the set of meanings that evolves [and] gives a group its own ethos, or distinctive character, which is expressed in patterns of belief (ideology), activity (norms and rituals), language and other symbolic forms through which organization members both create and sustain their view of the world and image of themselves in the world. The development of a worldview with its shared understanding of group identity, purpose, and direction are products of the unique history, personal interactions, and environmental circumstances of the group.  
(Smircich, 1983:56)

The allusion to 'shared' understanding does not account for the multiplicity of meanings, and ambiguous nature of the culture in which this project is based. The above definition provides a smooth, harmonious picture of culture, Martin (1992, 2002) suggests otherwise with her three perspectives, which are loosely based on modernist, interpretative and post-modern approaches to culture (Hatch, 2006).

In these three perspectives of harmony, conflict and ambiguity each conceives of a culture in radically different terms: as a homogenous unity; as a collection of subcultures; or as a gathering of transient, issue-specific concerns, constantly in flux (Martin, 2002:151).

**Table 3.1 The Three Cultural Perspectives, Source: Martin (2002)**

<i>Perspective</i>			
<i>Levels of Analysis</i>	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Differentiation</i>	<i>Fragmentation</i>
Organizational	Consensus throughout the organization; goal is assimilation and conformity	No organization-wide consensus; organization is cluster of sub-cultures	Issue-specific attention with no consensus; patterns of issue activation in flux
Subcultural	No important sub-cultural differences; sub-culture can represent whole	Relation of sub-cultures can be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing</li> <li>• Conflicting</li> <li>• Independent</li> </ul>	Sub-cultural boundaries uncertain, fluctuating, blurred, nested, overlapping
Individual	Self-unified, constant, a member of the culture	Self composed of multiple sub-cultural identities	Self fragmented, in flux, no central unity

## Integration

Culture is frequently portrayed as being 'shared' by a group, with the word shared becoming a code-breaker for studies in this perspective (Meyerson & Martin, 1987:624). Integrationist studies have three defining characteristics: organization-wide consensus, consistency, and clarity (Martin, 1992, 2002) and sometimes observe leaders as 'culture creators' (Meyerson & Martin, 1987), for example, Ouchi and Jaeger (1978), Pettigrew (1979) and Schein (1992:12), may define culture as:

A pattern of *shared* basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems [emphasis added].

The words 'shared' and 'correct' draw attention to the integrationist tendency in this definition. It suggests a reductionist perspective of culture that is *shared* by all, with a *correct* way to behave.

Sense-making as a kind of clarity creation, is an essential aspect of the basic assumptions that lie at the heart of Schein's approach to studying culture. These assumptions are derived from values that emerge from clear, "correct" solutions to problems.

(Martin, 1992:51)

Schein's (1992) framework is made up of three elements: artefacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions. Artefacts are the 'phenomena that one sees, hears and feels when one encounters a new group' (Schein, 1992:17), for example, architecture of the physical environment, language, clothing, myths and stories, and observable rituals and ceremonies. Espoused values are values that come to be tested, accepted and championed by members of the organization. According to Schein (1992:20) these values help to reduce 'uncertainty' and the 'derived beliefs and moral/ethical rules remain conscious and are explicitly articulated because they serve the normative or moral function of guiding members of the group in how to deal with certain key situations and in training new members in how to behave'. Values that then become 'taken for granted' become basic assumptions, which are the deepest unconscious manifestations of culture; equivalent to theories-in-use (Argyris, 1976; Argyris and Schon, 1974) which tend not to be 'confronted' or 'debated'

and so are harder to alter (Schein, 1992:22). The clarity with which culture is presented in this framework, which focuses 'only on manifestations that are consistent with each other', refute and prohibit ambiguity (Meyerson & Martin, 1987:625) may well be considered to be an ethical vacuum by philosophers that focus on the difficulties, dilemmas and messiness inherent to practice, particularly Derrida.

An integrationist study in most cases would embrace consistency in three ways: action, symbolic and content (Martin, 199:48).

Action consistency occurs when content themes are consistent with an organization's formal and informal practices. (ibid.)

Symbolic consistency is when the 'symbolic meanings of cultural forms such as physical arrangements, stories, rituals and jargon' (ibid.) are expressed as fitting with content themes and content consistency is evident when content themes are congruent. What about inconsistency? How is this dealt with in the integrationist perspective? Martin (1992:51) acknowledges that inconsistency may be mentioned in an integrationist study, but then resolved by linking this to a deeper consistency in the culture. Since from this perspective 'cultures...exist to alleviate anxiety, to control the uncontrollable, to bring predictability to the uncertain, and to clarify the ambiguous'. How does this type of cultural perspective deal with deviations? Members in what may be deemed an integrationist culture with focus on effectiveness, and managed culture change, would be unlikely to tolerate those who deviate from the shared vision (Martin, 1992). We may question whether the rejection or rebuff of deviance comes from members of the culture or the cultural system, but according to Trevino and Nelson (1999:204) 'organizations can proactively develop an ethical organizational culture and organizations with ethics problems should take a culture change approach to solving them'.

What about the ambiguity that is excluded? Ambiguity is defined in two different ways by Meyerson & Martin (1987:625-6). Firstly, ambiguity is akin to a confused state in which there is a lack of expected information, which can be resolved with a supply of information. Secondly, ambiguity from 'inherently

irresolvable conflict' or 'irreducible paradox' may be intrinsically unfathomable. This is said to occur when individuals encounter two 'irreconcilable meanings', a state not dissimilar to the undecidability in Derrida's work. The connections are present in the 'irreducible', 'irresolvable' and 'unfathomable', according to Derrida this experience is necessary to make a responsible decision, and it seems that the irreconcilability between meanings creates space and dialogue for new meaning to emerge.

### **Culture and Ethical Climate**

According to Key (1999) organizational ethical culture comprises a particular element of organizational culture which focuses on ethics and is future-orientated. Ethical climate is included as possibly a theoretical manifestation of ethics and the integrationist perspective of culture although a distinction is made between ethical climate and culture by Walton (2005:386) by distinguishing climate as being akin to 'public opinion', through 'taking the pulse' of employee experience by asking questions and gauging their shared opinions of working in the particular organization, due to these characteristics, climate can be 'transitory' and 'subject to sudden change'.

Corporate moral climate guides what an organization and its constituents will do when faced with issues of conflicting values. Moral climate includes both content – the shared perceptions of what constitutes ethical behaviour – and process: how ethical or moral issues will be dealt with.

(Mills, 2005:352)

The values of managers and organization rhetoric that relate to ethical issues and categorise what is acceptable ethically, help to develop an ethical climate. Individual perceptions are amalgamated to form the measure of an organizational climate hence it is constructed through aggregated perceptions (Victor & Cullen, 1987). Thus the ethical climate of a corporation, the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behaviour, and how ethical issues should be handled, both reflects and help define the ethics of a corporation' (ibid.p.51). We may question how 'ethically correct behaviour' would be determined as well as how it is possible to inform members of an organization as to 'how ethical issues should be handled'.

Similarly to earlier discussion on codes of conduct the guidance offered through the ethical climate construct seems to remove any real engagement with the situation at hand and instead directs what is 'correct' and therefore not correct, while telling employees how to handle such situations. This approach portrays ethical situations as straight forward, clear and with a ready-made solution. But this must be challenged by practice; the messiness, chaotic and ambiguous nature of such situations and the need for individuals to engage with the unpredictable nature of dilemmas and choices in order to take 'true' action.

It is suggested that the ethical climate constitutes the shared values that are present in culture, this accounts for those that are aware of their ethical values and the elements that are shared in a culture. However, as earlier, there are also inconsistencies and differences to be taken into account, hence the ethical climate represents a facet of culture, in the integration perspective of the cultural framework.

In this research culture is defined to include as an intrinsic element the unshared, divided, and chaotic aspects of an organization culture, in order to account for the lived experience rather than a more sanitized version of organizational culture.

### **Differentiation**

This section presents the second perspective of Martin's framework, which itself challenges the first perspective in depicting the inconsistencies, differences and 'non leader centred sources of cultural content' (Meyerson & Martin, 1987:630) and conflicts of the previously harmonious account.

The differentiation perspective focuses on cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations, such as when top executives announce a policy and then behave in a policy inconsistent manner. From the differentiation perspective, consensus exists in an organization – but only at lower levels of analysis, labelled "subcultures".

(Martin, 2002:94)

The sub-culture perspective extends the concept of organizational culture, offering a more chaotic idea of culture, arguably more dynamic than Schein's framework (Martin, 2002). In a differentiation perspective we may highlight the

inconsistencies of organizations' practice when formulating codes of conduct and then behaving inconsistently e.g. taking bribes. Whereas according to Martin, the previous perspective would reject deviation, this perspective provides space to account for it, in a sub-cultural context. Sub-cultures are:

[...] a sub-set of an organization's members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group in the organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be the problems of all, and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group.

(Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:38)

This perspective is concerned with accounting for members of the organization other than management, instead providing space for those who may not have power and status and therefore may be overlooked in the integrationist perspective. Differentiation perspectives acknowledge the consistency and harmony of the integrationist perspective while also charting the standpoints of those that view things differently (Martin, 1992). Van Maanen (1991:61-61) provides a glimpse of the sub-cultures that could be identified in his eminent article on the Disney Corporation:

A loose approximation of the rank ordering among these groups can be constructed as follows: (1) the upper-class prestigious Disneyland Ambassadors and Tour Guides (bi-lingual young women in charge of ushering – some say rushing – little bands of tourists through the park); (2) ride operators performing [coveted] “skilled work” such as live narration or tricky transportation tasks like those who symbolically control customer access to the park and drive the costly entry vehicles such as the antique trains, horse drawn carriages and monorail; (3) all other ride operators; (4) the proletarian sweepers (keepers of the concrete grounds); and (5) the sub-prole or peasant status Food and Concession workers (whose park sobriquets reflect their lowly self worth – “pancake ladies”, “peanut pushers”, “coke blokes”, “suds drivers”, and the seemingly irreplaceable “soda jerks”).

(Van Maanen, 1991:61-61)

It is important to note that this perspective does not then view each sub-culture in a consistent manner akin to the integrationist perspective. Acknowledgement of the inconsistencies in and between the sub-cultures is the crucial aspect of this approach. Martin (1992) notes that this second perspective breaks down dichotomies, for example between harmony and inconsistency, and instead



offers a sense of clarity with inconsistency. The difference between inconsistencies and ambiguities is important to identify as we move on to the next perspective.

Sometimes, the assumptions of a common language must be suspended, as it becomes clear that the same words carry contrasting meanings in different contexts.

(Meyerson & Martin, 1987:630)

### **Fragmentation**

The third perspective of Martin's framework challenges the two preceding perspectives, and previously called ambiguity (Meyerson & Martin, 1987), this singular word is effective in portraying this perspective.

The fragmentation perspective conceptualizes the relationship among cultural manifestations as neither clearly consistent nor clearly inconsistent. Instead, interpretations of cultural manifestations are ambiguously related to each other, placing ambiguity, rather than clarity, at the core of culture.

(Martin, 2002:94)

From a fragmentation perspective, the confusions, paradoxes, and unknowns that we encounter every day are salient and inescapable. Many conflicts are more like irreconcilable tensions, difficult to articulate, often paradoxical, rarely resolvable. Given the lives we lead isn't ambiguity the essence of any adequate cultural description?

(Martin, 1992:9)

In this view the members in an organization do not share anything other than an awareness of ambiguity being an everyday part of organizational living (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). When consideration is made of the connections between differentiation and fragmentation, we may note that:

Fragmentation studies see the boundaries of subcultures as permeable and fluctuating, in response to environmental changes in feeder cultures. The salience of particular subcultural memberships wax and wane, as issues surface, get resolved or become forgotten in the flux of events. In this context, the manifestations of culture must be multifaceted – their meanings hard to decipher and necessarily open to multiple interpretations.

(Meyerson & Martin, 1987)

A web is the image which best describes this perspective according to Meyerson and Martin (1987). As issues arise particular parts on a web would

light up to join together to inspire discussion and debate, with a constant change. The culture represented in this section is unclear, and constantly in flux which Morgan (1997) uses as one of his organizational images.

According to Hatch this view is closely related to postmodernism, which Hassard (2003) discusses widely in his paper on Derrida. The dilemma or tension of placing discussion of postmodernism in this work is deemed problematic, as, among others, Derrida refuses to be placed into such a category.

It is important to disrupt the assumption that Derrida provides a postmodern ethics, and to be clear about the differences between Derrida and Bauman...Derrida has absolutely no interest in attempts at periodizations or in his work being taken as 'postmodern'.

(Jones, 2003:243)

As well as having the opportunity for ethical reflection and decision within the ambiguous space that this perspective gives us a view of, since it is these conditions that provides the possibility of engaging with true ethics (Derrida, Jones) then it can be suggested that a responsible organization and person will be more marked by fragmentation than integration or differentiation. Jones (2007c) considers Martin's framework, questioning her own position within the perspectives. He explores the idea of her being unable to remain neutral and work within all three perspectives as she acknowledges being more at home within a particular perspective (which is not noted). He then questions 'Martin's treatment of ambiguity' (ibid.p8) as it is used as the basis of separation of the three perspectives and her considerations of the 'coherence' that each perspective should have (Martin, 1992: 190).

It is possible that the idea that each perspective will consist of consensus, consistency and the exclusion of ambiguity is exactly the presumption of the integration perspective, and that we might end up judging all three perspectives in terms of the first. (Jones, 2007:10)

Jones (2007c) questions how far-reaching ambiguity is in the way that it is used in each perspective; integration: excluding, differentiation: channeling, fragmentation: focusing. He extends the possibilities for ambiguity, through considering that ambiguity could be both 'a matter of undecidable relations of force between strictly determined possibilities' and 'infinite openness of

indeterminacy' (ibid.p11).

At the same time as a certain plural is arguably Martin's key contribution to the study of organizational culture, there are points on which her text displays a systematic blindness to this very same plural. (ibid)

### **Summary**

In summary, the three perspectives are three differing ways of exploring organizations, which will be used together, as directed by Martin, to learn about the culture in the case study of this thesis.

The integration perspective's theoretical and empirical claims of clarity may not be justified. Organizations, environments, and group boundaries are constantly changing. Individuals have fragmented, fluctuating self-concepts. One moment a person thinks of himself or herself as belonging to one sub-culture, and a minute later another subcultural membership becomes salient. People fluctuate in this way because they are faced with inescapable contradictions, as well as things they do not understand. Good cultural research should capture these complexities, rather than exclude them from the definition of culture.

(Martin, 1992:9)

The aspiration of this thesis in studying both informal and formal aspects of culture can be identified as combining 'ideational' and 'material manifestations' and therefore adopting a 'generalist' approach (Martin, 2002:60). The overview that is provided through categorising data (accounts) in terms of the integrational (or shared) aspects of perspectives, the differentiated meanings and sub-groups present, and fragmented voices and aspects of culture, will illuminate the individual, sub-cultural and organizational positioning of Corporate Social Responsibility. Thereby, as advocated by Martin (2002), this study will be drawing on all three perspectives. The complementary nature of the three perspectives is illustrated in the table below.

Martin (1992:15) warns that focussing on a single perspective provides a narrow and 'distorted' view of culture, and that to draw on the three perspectives may 'broaden' and 'deepen' awareness. Nevertheless she acknowledges that due to the 'problematic nature of categories' a three perspective framework will misrepresent and diminish 'complexities' of accounts that are inclusive and exclusive of a study.

**Table 3.2**

**Complimentary approach of Three Theoretical Perspectives, Martin (2002:95)**

<i>Perspective</i>			
	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Differentiation</i>	<i>Fragmentation</i>
Orientation to consensus	Organization-wide consensus	Sub-cultural consensus	Lack of consensus
Relation among Manifestations	Consistency	Inconsistency	Not clearly consistent or inconsistent
Orientation to ambiguity	Exclude it	Channel it outside sub-cultures	Acknowledge it

### **3.7 Corporate Social Responsibility in Societal Sectors**

As we have already noted Corporate Social Responsibility is considered to be firmly rooted in the private sector, with the perceived “harm to public good” (Stoll, 2007:18) that needs to be redressed. One of the implications of the voluntary Corporate Social Responsibility approach and lack of legislation is that practice is “characterised by many unsystematic practices, i.e. constellations of arrangements that are fit for purpose in specific contexts but which lack transferability and sustainability” (Seitanidi and Crane, 2008). On balance one of the impacts is the elicitation of intensified debate through differing societal sectors focussing on responsibilities of every sector in tackling social and environmental issues (Seitanidi, 2007a).

Where Carroll (1999) sees ambiguity, Lockett et al (2006) see Corporate Social Responsibility as evolutionary but agree that it has different meanings to different people. The definition therefore depends on the perspective of the party defining Corporate Social Responsibility; which would vary greatly, for example, between an NGO, government or private sector organization. It has been acknowledged that organizations themselves define Corporate Social Responsibility differently and therefore to be socially responsible is not necessarily reflected similarly in working practices (Kakabadse & Rozuel, 2006). Sector context and demands are crucial factors to be taken into account, as is organizational culture in defining what Corporate Social Responsibility means to an individual organization. If accountability is an essential element of *any* definition of Corporate Social Responsibility then it may in fact be of more significance to public sector and not-for profit organizations as public funds are drawn on to fund projects, therefore, greater accountability and transparency are required by relevant authorities and stakeholders than is normal in the private sector. Stakeholders are acknowledged as holding specific significance for public and non-profit organizations, which usually have more varied groups of stakeholders than for profit organizations (Bryson, 1995) hence the stakeholder model is deemed to be particularly important in the not-for-profit and public sectors (Vinten, 2000).

It is crucial to recognise that Corporate Social Responsibility is of ‘interest for every single organization, not only private and profit driven ones, but also public

and not-for-profit' (Kakabadse & Rozuel, 2006: 79). Whereas private sector organizations are answerable ultimately to shareholders, public sector organizations are arguably accountable to the public. What about the third sector? According to Nielson (2005:385) ethical issues in business, government and non-profit organizations are much more similar than different.

In the changing social scene the trisector divide of society (state, non-profit, for profit organizations) seems an imposed notion rather than a reflection of the complex reality organizations face, whereby interdependency and interconnection blur the borders between each sector.

(Seitanidi, 2005:61)

The third sector is defined by the UK government as:

'...non-governmental organizations which are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.'

Seitanidi refers to the third sector in her paper as the non commercial sector (NCS) which comprises public bodies, quangos/regulatory bodies, co-operatives and mutuals, charities, and social enterprises. All of these manifestations are connected with a higher purpose to develop social, environmental or cultural objectives or 'public good'.

The difference from the profit sector lies in the fact that the success of...operations stems from the principles they represent and not solely from their commercial acceptance.

(Seitanidi, 2005:62)

Some third sector organizations such as Quangos have a tenuous link with private sector organizations, particularly those operating in sensitive industries, e.g. mining, pharmaceutical, oil, tobacco, such NGOs are well known for actively lobbying corporate organizations.

Where do the borders of responsibility of a commercial organization stop and where does the responsibility of a non-commercial organization start?

(Seitanidi, 2005:66)

This question requires particular consideration in the context of this research, and in the light of Derrida's work on boundaries. Cross sector partnerships offer an interesting meeting place.

The pressures become even greater, more complex and dynamic in the case of partnerships between commercial and non-commercial entities.

(Seitanidi, 2005:64)

Seitanidi (2005:67) notes the changes taking place in the third sector, particularly the move towards more business like operations and 'professionalisation', highlighting the third sector as a unique context in which to explore Corporate Social Responsibility. There certainly seems to be a shift signalling new ways of relating to the third sector, with research in, corporate governance (Low, 2006), accountability (Gray, Bebbington and Collinson, 2005), mapping stakeholder perceptions (Fletcher et al, 2003) and non-profit business partnerships (Seitanidi, 2007b). The roles of the three sectors are experiencing change with uncertainties of boundaries, limits and responsibilities (Seitanidi, 2005).

### **3.8 SMEs and CSR**

Research on Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and CSR has been more limited than CSR research on larger companies (Moore, Slack and Gibbon, 2009), and as SMEs are small but not just a shrunken big firm, different aspects are to be explored when undertaking research (Moore et al, 2009; Fassin, 2008; Graafland et al, 2003).

The terminology that is used to explore responsibility amongst SMEs is an issue given that the practices differ widely from those in corporate organisations. Southwell (2004) argues that although 'corporate social responsibility' was most widely recognised in her research, it was not the most appropriate phrase. 'Responsible business practice' was identified as an alternative, replacing the words "corporate" and "social" with "business" and "practice" focuses on the integral practice of SMEs (Moore and Spence, 2006). Essentially this outlines the distinction between the responsibilities of corporations and smaller organisations. This discussion parallels the questions

inherent to exploring corporate social responsibility in a third sector organisation though the use of 'business' would not be an appropriate alternative to 'corporate' in the third sector context. The differences of scale not only have implications for nomenclature but for meaning and practice.

Moore and Spence (2006) contrast the enterprise literature with its focus on business growth and profit, with the SME literature and the burgeoning interest in 'responsible business practice' (Southwell, 2004:100). SME practice is less likely to focus on profit maximisation, strategic management and marketing according to Moore and Spence (2006) and there is growing acknowledgement of the importance of studying both the meaning and the practice of responsibility (Perrini, 2006; Moore and Spence, 2006; Moore, Slack and Gibbon, 2009).

The practices through which 'responsibility' is expressed and given meaning in small businesses are not readily identifiable 'due to the inapplicability of CSR theory to the small firm context' (Moore and Spence, 2006:221). This argument is supported by empirical research by Moore, Slack and Gibbon (2009) which found that the ethical purpose of fair trade organisations meant that responsible practices did not need to be formalised. Much in the same way, we may consider that third sector values and purpose may translate into a lack of formalised responsible business practices, but still provide the basis for ethical behaviour. The lack of resources in the day to day running of a small business may mean less time to think about responsible business practice, this does not translate into an absence of ethical behaviour, just that small businesses may not formalise such behaviour in the way that a large firm does, hence remaining more ad hoc (Moore and Spence, 2006).

Such informality has strong advocates in ethics research (Fassin, 2008), the requirement for judgment without formality may be what safeguards the possibility of ethics, as employees have the freedom to think and act in a non-prescribed way. Such an ethics has other implications, for example for policy and generalisation. From a policy perspective, there has been a focus on locating best practice, but Moore and Spence (2006) question what this means



in the small business context, and in particular the presupposition that SMEs are not acting in a responsible way.

Fuller and Tian (2006) support this through their finding that it is the embeddedness of the firm within the community that provides much of the basis for responsible business practice. Close relationships with local communities can be integral to SME operations, particularly if customers are drawn from the immediate geographical area (Moore and Spence, 2006).

Links to the community may well therefore be both an intrinsic part of how SMEs behave, and something to be encouraged, rather than something to be regarded as a 'bolt-on' activity. (Moore et al, 2009:3)

Alongside the embeddedness consideration, is the perspective that the small business has of its own practice, in the sense that what one may consider to be responsible behaviour may be intrinsic to their practice and not be identified as such by the organisation (Moore et al, 2009). This also connects back to the issue around terminology as SMEs may be behaving in a 'CSR' way without defining it or realising it (Moore et al, 2009; Southwell 2004).

### **Measurement of CSR / RBP activity**

Despite both the practical difficulties and theoretical critiques of diagnosing what 'best practice' might mean in ethics, attempts have been made to use work around measurement in CSR research in the context of small businesses. Graafland et al (2003) identify three CSR strategies that apply to any organisation; Compliance, Integrity and Dialogue. Whilst the first two strategies have an element of prescription, the third approach is 'responsive' to demands, with a sense of unpredictability as there are no rules to follow as such. Is this the space for ethics? Graafland et al's research finds that the dialogue strategy is more prevalent in their research than the other approaches.

Moore et al (2009) explore four themes of responsibility; governance of responsible business practice, employees in the organisation, stakeholder relationships and finally, external reporting and monitoring in the context of fair trade organisations. From these four broad themes were derived sixteen criteria, as detailed in the table below. They used the criteria as a basis for an

exploratory study examining the website disclosures of eleven fair-trade organisations, followed by requests for information made to each organisation. They found that there was a consistent 'under-reporting of responsible business practice activity' (Ibid:13). When organisations were contacted and further information was received on the criteria then the compliance rate (alignment of organisational activity with the criteria set out) rose from 32.5% to 57.5%. Moore et al suggest that this under-reporting impacts upon the 'broadening' and 'adoption' of responsible behaviour by other SMEs, as the 'champions of responsible business practice' are unseen (Ibid.). But it is this necessity to be seen that remains one of the main criticisms of corporate CSR activity which Roberts (date) reminds us of with the tale of Narcissus.

The point is that commitment – simple involvement on a *personal* basis – would seem to be at the root of true social responsibility. And the opportunities for this in the giant organization would seem to be increasingly limited. (Mintzberg, 2008:49)

### **Concluding summary**

This chapter has considered conventional CSR approaches, followed by discussion of ethics as practice and engaging with the ideas of Derrida on undecidability. Martin's three perspectives were then examined in turn. Lastly, the third sector and SME context were highlighted by considering what CSR may mean within such circumstances.



**Table 3.3 Criteria for RBP by grouping (Moore et al, 2009:7)**

	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Search Terms</b>
<b><i>Governance of RBP</i></b>			
1	Profit Motive	Degree to which maximisation of profit is not a clear priority or is regarded as a constraint rather than a priority	<b>profit(s)</b>
2	Code of conduct	Code of ethics, values statement/rules of conduct	<b>code of conduct</b>
3	Ethics Committee	A committee with responsibility for implementation and monitoring of a code of conduct or ethical matters in general	<b>ethics committee</b>
4	Board member	Member of the board with specific responsibility for ethics issues	<b>ethics director</b>
<b><i>Employees in the organisation</i></b>			
5	Staff handbook	Internal document clarifying the position of employees on labour conditions, rules etc.	<b>staff handbook</b>
6	Training for employees	Training in relation to codes of ethics and their application	<b>ethics training</b>
7	Responsibility towards employees	Skill development Work-life balance Health and well-being	<b>employee employee welfare employee skills employee health employee well-being staff staff welfare staff skills staff health staff well-being</b>
8	Confidential person	Someone independent to whom employees can turn	<b>mentor confidential person</b>
<b><i>Stakeholder relationships</i></b>			
9	Responsibility towards the environment	Environmental policy Recycling Reducing waste	<b>environment(al) sustainable(ility)</b>
10	Responsibility towards the community	Support sporting activities Support cultural activities Support health and welfare activities Support educational and training activities Give preference to personnel from socially deprived groups when recruiting	<b>community(ies)</b>

		Participate in public affairs or political process on behalf of the enterprise	
11	Responsibility towards suppliers	Ethical sourcing policy and practices	<b>supplier(s) producer(s)</b>
12	Responsibility towards customers/clients	Product/ service safety Product/ service quality Pricing/ value for money Customer satisfaction Marketing information	<b>customer(s) client(s)</b>
13	Responsibility towards competitors	Behave responsibly in relation to competitors Collaborate appropriately	<b>competitor(s)</b>
<b><i>External reporting and monitoring</i></b>			
14	Certification	ISO 9001 (quality) ISO 14001 (environmental) Investors in people	<b>ISO9001 ISO14001 investor(s) in people</b>
15	Communication with stakeholders	Communication with: Employees External Shareholders Customers Suppliers Government (local or national) Media	<b>stakeholder(s)</b>
16	Social report	Publication of an (annual) audit of social and environmental impacts	<b>social report social account(s) environmental report</b>

## **Chapter Four      Analysis, Discussion and Findings**

This chapter discusses and analyses interview, diary and focus group data structured around participants' own words; verbatim interview quotes, focus group comments or written reflections from the research diaries. The discussion starts with consideration of how participant's accounts could be read in Martin's framework, followed by the themes that have arisen from the research data. Themes of meaning, boundaries, tensions, dilemmas and impact. I then reflect on how meaning construction may have changed over time and what impact this research has had over the research period.

In this chapter individual's accounts are pulled together to learn of the context in which it is placed, to engage with practice that is both processual and contextual. The quotes are fragmented, just as living stories are considered to be, rather than narrative which is suggested to place order and focuses more on structure than content (Boje, 2008).

### **4.1 Cultural Perspectives**

In considering how cultural perspectives illuminate the ethical issues encountered by members of groundwork Northumberland, I have used Martin's framework of cultural perspectives to provide some views of the organization.

#### **Integration**

The following quotes highlight shared values from working in the third sector, democratic decision making, and similar drivers that smooth out tensions and shared motivations for working in the sector:

We take turns to chair, which is really good and turns to take minutes and one week [NAME] who you've not met she had this idea of erm she gave us all a card and she got us all to answer specific questions about the meetings like do we want them more frequently, less frequently and that's how we came to this idea of alternating admin and projects through that and whether we changed the times that all that. So in a way you could say we came to that by consensus not absolute one hundred percent consensus sorry by but by democracy anyway.  
(Amelia – Landscape Architect and Manager)

Another one is partnership working where there is a strong sense of value. The challenge is how that works out in practice and everyone has agreed on the basic idea of that we are an orientated working

partnership, we have an obligation to get the best value out of our partnership arrangements and it is built into structurally again the areas of tension, of creative tension, coming where you are working with a particular partner on a particular scheme and he is starting to get complicated priorities or complicated messages but it is evident that it is quite a strong drive in peoples' behaviour.  
(Hugh – Executive Director)

I think in general when you look at your area of research and you look at all the comments, there's something that's common to most of them and that's that we all feel that the job that we do and the business that we are in goes hand in hand with these responsibilities.  
(Gary – Office Manager)

When asked, 'Do you think your colleagues would answer similarly when asked about organizational values?' these participants agreed that others' perspectives on organizational values would concur with their own:

Well generally speaking I think that the people who come into this sort of area of work, their main driver isn't money and if it was then they wouldn't be working for the organization.  
(Laura – Education Co-ordinator)

Hmmm yes, I should hope so I think that's really you know it's like people, places and community. It's all community really isn't it so I think that's the strongest message really or the strongest belief. Errr yeh hopefully.  
(Louis – Landscape Assistant)

Yes the same basic, I hate to say it, but maybes slightly different slants on the same sort of theme.  
(Emma – Community Greenspace Officer)

Yes, I mean there would be varieties on a theme but I think essentially that's the sort of thing that they would say. (Gary)

The integration perspective offers a depiction of order and harmony which we may question from the later discussions in this chapter. Even the appearance of tension is superseded by a deeper sense of shared beliefs and therefore reconciled.

### **Differentiation**

Methods of communication:

To the outside world:

As individuals we probably communicate in very different ways to the outside world – this was supposed to relate to Corporate Social

Responsibility. There is no pressure to portray a “corporate” way. Much is left to individuals to develop their own style, or use their experience to make best judgements about things like this – this is a positive thing because it implies trust. It also might feel to some people that there is not enough management support.

Verbal communications have no corporate line, though certain standards are expected such as being political correctness, political neutrality, etc. To a lesser degree there are certain values which are taken by some people in the organization for granted such as interest in the environment, ethical standards etc, and others who have different expectations.

(Amelia, 25/07/07)

This extract emphasises trust and making judgements but also acknowledges diverse individuals, and differences between value sets of people working for GN.

### **Differentiation in Sub-Cultures**

In response to ‘Do you think that your work colleagues would answer similarly when asked the same questions around values?’ participants replied:

Erm no they’d probably answer different I would think. I think depends at what level as well at the more senior level you might have more of an idea of what the organization’s about.  
(Lindsay – Landscape Assistant)

Not the Green Wing [to represent us] well I tell you the thing that I said we were so diverse apart from the fact that we’ve got strong ethical values. I think Green Wing is quite good ‘cause it’s quite chaotic and there’s lots of different personalities working against each other occasionally and working together. (Amelia)

Hmmm probably not I think, I don’t know, I don’t do a lot with other people like. I obviously talk to everyone in the office and stuff but my job doesn’t overlap with anyone else’s job. Mine is a project in its own right and I only work on that one project, and erm I don’t really do much work with other people you know. ‘Cause there’s no money for them to work with me and so you know it’s it’s like me a couple of minutes help here and there. But so I’ll probably think quite differently ‘cause I don’t work closely enough with other people to think the same, probably I guess.  
(Emma)



Differentiation may be identified by the existence of sub-cultures in the above quotes there seems to be distinct work team cultures and hierarchical cultures. Acknowledgements of the inconsistencies in and between sub-cultures, introduces complexity to this perspective of GN's culture.

### **Fragmentation**

We have them written down somewhere, they are the Groundwork UK organizational values.

RH: For people, places, and prosperity..?

Yes. Because they're quite windy I suppose, they're probably not all that useful, but in practice, for the organization... we haven't sat down and defined our own list on paper because there is a list in here that we're obliged to use, which is there. I can't recite it to you. What happens in practice is that we spend our time talking about and pushing on some of those factors in particular so we have for instance recently had some quality and diversity training and the training itself is not so much of interest than in fact people felt that that training should take place. That wasn't some kind of corporate plan that I then communicated to say we have to do this at this time. People felt it should take place because there were some internal tensions in the organization which basically tells us two things 1) there are some differences in individuals' value sets and their ways of behaving and 2) that there is a strength of feeling in the organization which stems from- an overall sense that that's an important value area.

(Hugh)

Sustainability is a strong driver in the sense of environmental sustainability and it is quite interesting that environment is not a word that appears there but the team as a whole, again there are differences between individuals and again that is a source of sometimes conflict and tension, but the team as a whole has a strong sense of drive in the respect of environmental sustainability and what tends to happen is that different teams and different individuals depending on their professional background has different angles on that. For example one person might be particularly... biodiversity might be a strong factor in their thinking, for another it may be climate change, for somebody else it might be drainage systems. It is still evident as a strong driver in the organization.

(Hugh)

I think you will get very different answers from different individuals on specific topics. I think probably everybody would agree that Groundwork Northumberland is strongly value driven but there would be very different emphasis on the kinds of values we're talking about. You will talk to some and they will regard for instance, business systems or cost control or business efficiency as a strong value driver and think that everyone

else exaggerates the quality and diversity and they can't understand it. That will certainly be true. (Hugh)

I suppose maybe linked around the beta plus stuff is that I can imagine I don't know why I'm thinking about what other people think. I can imagine that one person was very focussed on process and that doesn't need much working out. And that is important but the thing is that people tick in different ways and of course you know that makes some people tick and it doesn't make other people tick. And I think the problem, I think the issue is with the organization erm is that linked around beta plus for example we went through this whole you know it was about a quality system. And erm it was all very logical and made sense and obviously we're never gonna score highly, massively highly cause we're a young organization. And I think probably some people because of some other folks' concentration on process were quite negative. About you know how we were performing and you know how individually people were performing, how we were as a group. And I think you know sometimes it's actually good to just go out and do something. And in terms of the socially responsible element of it I think that maybe it would be good if sort of from a, from a kind of leadership angle it was taken on more that it was just right we're doing this then. And that's gonna happen and I don't want you to worry about the fact that erm you know this hasn't been done and that hasn't been done and this hasn't been done but I think this will be important to do. And I'm not saying that everything's pivotal around that one thing but I just think that then that would, there is an element of I lead and people will follow. And alright I realise that people do need to take responsibility for their own actions and need to take a bit of well I need to believe in this. But sometimes I do feel a bit like there's small little pockets of I want to do this and I want to do that and maybe we're not kind of coming together to make it happen. But that's just maybe you know being a lamb rather than a sheep. (Laura)

I mean I don't like conflict either and do my best to make sure it doesn't happen to but it's a bit hard when you have lots of personalities and some of them are quite strong. (Amelia)

I came out yesterday and I think everyone around me who doesn't work with the community is going on about how we should be, I don't think they understand where I'm coming from. (Amelia)

Everybody put down what their thoughts were on all different areas they asked pertinent questions and things then we all put it together with scores and it was *amazing* how much of a variation there was. (Gary)

The ambiguity and chaos of the culture in GN is more apparent in the quotes included in this perspective. There is a general lack of consensus, with no definitive consistencies or inconsistencies, placing ambiguity at the centre of culture.

Many conflicts are more like irreconcilable tensions, difficult to articulate, often paradoxical, rarely resolvable (Martin, 1992:9).

The third perspective highlighting ambiguity, paradox and contradiction seems to best represent the accounts of the research engagement with GN. This is evidenced by ambiguity and contradictory perspectives in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility but is not surprising considering the organization's early positioning on the journey to understanding what Corporate Social Responsibility means to them. The tensions evident in the third perspective indicate that the organization is grappling with these issues daily and therefore could be said to be engaging in a more CSR1 way (O'Dwyer, 2002). The empirical research highlights this perspective as providing the conditions that illuminate the possibility of engaging with true ethics within the participants' practice, as implicitly acknowledged by Hugh when noting the tensions that are felt by the group (Derrida, Jones). The presence of tension and difference as well as a sense of disorder suggest a place for debate, discussion and plurivocality, a place in which there is indecision and the possibility of decision (Derrida). It can therefore be suggested that a responsible organization and person will be more marked by fragmentation than integration or differentiation, and that fragmentation provides conditions which Derrida discusses through the terms 'aporia' and 'undecidability'.

### **Summary**

We can see how the accounts of GN participants could be placed in Martin's framework from the division of extracts above and yet the complexity of the different voices and the interplay between them is not as present. While the framework may inform us of the different conceptions of culture, this account may be considered to be more complete and be able to speak for itself without a frame. This connects to Jones (2007c) critique of Martin's framework in questioning how far-reaching ambiguity is in the way that it is used in the three perspective framework and supports ambiguity that could be both 'a matter of undecidable relations of force between strictly determined possibilities', otherwise termed 'tensions' by research participants, and 'infinite openness of indeterminacy' (ibid.p11).

## 4.2 Meanings of responsibility

In this section participants highlight that responsibility is integral to their organizational purpose and practice, and that being truly responsible may mean; helping other businesses to practice responsibly, doing something over and above their jobs and being good neighbours. Their accounts illustrate their active deliberations and questioning of their responsibilities, which challenge their everyday practice. This is contrasted with conceptions of private sector responsibilities and the term corporate social responsibility is identified by some to be inappropriate to a third sector setting. The accounts remain purposely chaotic rather than ordered, to provide a sense of the agreements, confusion, deliberations and questioning of the participants.

The discussion of meaning is derived from the following interview questions (in April, May and August 2007):

Has Corporate Social Responsibility been talked about in your organization or in the wider national organization? What are your thoughts on this?  
What are the reasons in your view of incorporating a Corporate Social Responsibility approach?  
How would you describe a responsible organization in your own words?

To most of the participants Corporate Social Responsibility is viewed as intrinsic to their way of working and there are indications that ethical deliberations and thoughts are part of everyday working, we may consider alongside this that 'moral practice...must set itself standards which it cannot reach, and never placate itself with self-assurances' (Bauman, 1993:81). There is a sense of responsibility *being* in the words used by the interviewees, rather than *to be* responsible; a living, open, changing responsibility.

I think the way that we work goes hand in hand with it anyway, because of what we do, we just fall straight into line with that. (Gary)

I mean it does seem to be the perfectly natural thing or at least that's the way my brain thinks about it. It just seems to be something that we should be doing normally. You know just as a as err common as doing anything; arriving in the morning, putting the key in the door which should be part of err part of it. Erm well I mean it would be responsible to do what I thought there just to have it as part of your everyday, as part of what you actually are, as a company you know... that is an intrinsic part of the overall *being*, if you like. (Louis)

I have decided that because our organization as a whole is supposed to practice corporate social responsibility as one of its main objectives i.e. community led regeneration. I will look at the internal mechanisms instead in this diary.  
(Amelia, Diary Entry, 16/07/07)

There is awareness, in the quotes below, that the projects which they deliver daily would be seen as Corporate Social Responsibility in the private sector. This links to an earlier debate in chapter three when considering the suitability of the term corporate social responsibility in a SME context, and that an alternative term, such as responsible business practice may be appropriate (Jenkins, 2004). Participants are suggesting that the term applies to them differently and that 'CSR' signifies practice within a private sector context.

For some businesses...their view of being corporately socially responsible would be for them to do a project like...we do as part of our core business.  
(Gary)

Mentioned in our beta plus stuff there was a whole section about Corporate Social Responsibility. And actually there was kind of a bit of a debate about what that meant because its quite diverse isn't it really. As in for some businesses that's their view of being corporately socially responsible would be for them to do a project like what we do as part of our core business. (Laura)

Gary and Laura highlight that responsible practice is at the core of their work whilst also contrasting the differences in the meaning of responsibility in their context as compared to the private sector. Laura and Lindsay emphasise that responsibility is manifested differently within their organization, Laura suggests that responsibility 'is more about living it and breathing it everyday'. It is clear that the purpose of this organization, which is alluded to by the participants' accounts throughout this chapter, marks the response that is expected.

I suppose for the third sector it doesn't and can't have the same definition as for the corporate sector and maybe it is just more about living it and breathing it everyday. (Laura)

Erm I think it's a good thing yeh I suppose I always like it to be private corporations not like people, organizations like worselves anyway.

Whereas it should apply to us but I suppose you get a bit bogged down in the fact that you're a charity anyway, you're doing good anyway and that's the sort of thing that blinds ya. Whereas for instance Nestles or Proctor and Gamble you know you think yeh they should have corporate social responsibility but then so should we. (Lindsay)

There is also a sense that even though social responsibilities are intrinsic to their work, it is what they are paid to do, and so a definition of responsibility as doing something 'over and above' their existent work is meaningful. The motivation given for making this extra effort is described as making an added contribution or because it is the right thing to do. Emma uses the words 'once people realized it was over and above what we do as a job we realized I think that we probably didn't do anything'. I don't know how people realized, who 'people' are, or when that took place. I think that the Beta Plus meeting may have been the time that Emma is discussing, and it seems that the notion of responsibility being 'over and above' was introduced. This notion could be considered to be more private-sector aligned, such as charitable giving and volunteering of time. Does this have any meaning within the third sector? It may be more responsible to spend time engaging with the local communities that Groundwork Northumberland work with.

I suppose it's just a general bonus isn't it, if you do think a bit outside the box considering others and thinking about wider than your immediate actions.  
(Lindsay)

I don't know cause it's the right thing to do isn't it. If everyone does a bit then that much more good things happen isn't it, everyone should be able to spare a bit of time for you know charitable acts type thing.  
(Emma)

Once people realised it was over and above what we do as a job we realised I think that we probably didn't do anything. Well I think probably because we do good things for our jobs we don't bother doing more I think. [Do] we do anything for charity? No not really, we just do our job which is a socially responsible type of job. But that's what we're paid to do, do you know what I mean, but as an organization we didn't do anything more than we had to I think.  
(Emma)

While for others when considering whether there's a place for Corporate Social Responsibility in their organization, they specified their responsibility as being

to help other organizations to be engaged with the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda, through cross sector partnerships (Seitanidi, 2007b):

Yeh I mean, I think if we were going to do it, it would have to be from the reverse angle I guess. Not that we would be, our corporate social responsibility would be to deliver others, for you know to give others the opportunity to do that. That's our core corporate social responsibility to enable others to deliver theirs. I don't think *personally*, speaking on behalf of the organization, I don't think well I don't think we're big enough or have the capacity or the resources or in fact that it's our remit to have our own corporate social responsibility. So I think if you wanted to label it for us then it would be as a vehicle to deliver others and that would be our responsibility. I don't think it's the other way round because we're all quite keen to do it anyway. (Wendy – Business Manager)

But does that mean that certain corporations or whatever would use as their...if they decided to work with us would they offset that and say that that's their corporate social responsibility? (Louis)

Use other businesses that want to do some social good to help us fund projects that we want to do – this was discussed at project meeting @ Groundwork Northumberland.  
(Emma, Diary Entry, 07/08)

This 'private sector term' has led one participant to identify difficulties around interpreting and identifying what Corporate Social Responsibility may mean in the third sector or public sector:

It's just I feel what might not actually be seen as Corporate Social Responsibility...in essence probably is. (Wendy)

] Wendy's thoughts on Groundwork Northumberland's practice, and the sense that what one may consider to be responsible behaviour may be intrinsic to their practice and not be identified as such by the organization is supported by Moore et al (2009).

Sadly at a regional level I've never had a discussion about it with anyone and with other trusts in the region, I think that's fair to say. And I don't know whether that's because it's not...it's called something else, and I think there's a real issue about that. (Wendy)

This also connects back to the issue around terminology as SMEs may be behaving in a 'CSR' way without defining it or realising it (Moore et al, 2009; Southwell, 2004).

I have had a conversation about tapping into businesses to you know use it but again not in the terminology of corporate social responsibility. (Wendy)

This leads to questioning what Corporate Social Responsibility means in a third sector context and acknowledging ambiguity (Carroll, 1999) and the differing meanings for different contexts and individuals in those contexts (Lockett et al, 2006):

I think there are lots of trusts who do work with organizations to deliver work and they take volunteers out but I don't think it's necessarily called corporate social responsibility. I think that's particularly a private sector term and I don't think that the third sector or indeed the public sector are particularly good at interpreting what that actually means to them. (Wendy)

Corporate Social Responsibility is based on a private sector model we need our own model for the voluntary sector. I see it as a bolt onto the core objectives of a charity, balancing off the way 'we do things, competing value sets and having a broader remit with less 'blind-spots', with quality assurance a definite element of that. (Hugh)

When considered in this context, a distinction is made between the profit orientated, instrumental private sector aims and using Corporate Social Responsibility as the way we do things. When in fact it is suggested that the way charities operate already comes from a socially responsible philosophy and so the added value of a Corporate Social Responsibility approach would be to use this as a 'balance' to 'temper' the charitable objectives and value sets. The distinctions between competing value sets is elaborated on as unclear, in contrast to the profit and value set conflict in private sector organizations, as competing value sets are complex and it is necessary to be aware of 'blind spots' which are defined as overlooking a social group or increasing awareness of impact and being inclusive.

To me it means... broadly speaking a bolt-on to the core objectives of the charity. So...in the private sector context...I could see corporate social responsibility as a value set which underlies the things we do, it characterises the way we do things. With the charitable sector context it is a way of balancing off the way that we do things, so if I am an environmental charity I should take it as an assumption that I will work towards working out sustainable solutions, leading to the question about using green energy or not, so I should have a focus on that anyway because it will be contained in my charitable objectives and values. But I



might not have focus on quality and diversity. If I have got a coherent corporate social responsibility policy going on, or in practice some influence going on then it acts as a balance to some of that stuff. So let's say I have a specific remit to install renewable energy. I could bash my way through the remit to install renewable energy and I can beat my target of getting 500 micro-renewable CHPs in the next year, that's fine, I can do that. If I have got a corporate social responsibility policy running alongside that which says when I am pursuing this objective I must take notice of the diversity of local communities and that there are some communities in our area which will struggle to pay for micro-renewables because of social disadvantage or whatever, if I have that running alongside it will balance and temper what I am doing around the core of my objectives. I think that it is an area of particular challenge for charities because of the competing value sets which are very similar in nature so if you were a private sector organization you can say well...I have to generate profits, then I can see how that would have to be balanced with these other value sets. But when you've got competing value sets both of which may be social then it's a bit more of a challenge. If I had a strong corporate social responsibility policy then it would have a section in here, probably under quality, there's a quality section with performance management and continual improvement. And you find particular corporate social responsibility items in here, so environmental management systems, child protection... there will be others that come up in the future like investors with people, in that they're value based but they're also business based. If we were a bit more developed we would have a section in that or a separate section which is about corporate social responsibility which tries to promote those areas which we might have a blind spot to. (Hugh)

Hugh expresses how Corporate Social Responsibility could have meaning in a third sector context, in a form that balances the way the organization operates, indicating that Corporate Social Responsibility is 'of interest for every single organization' (Kakabadse & Rozuel, 2006:79) and is not bound in the private sector. He offers a sense of the complexity of value sets and how they become complex in practice through the discussion of renewable energy. He outlines that while his remit may be to install a set number of micro-renewables, his responsibility alongside that would be to consider communities that may not be able to pay for such technology ('I must take notice') and to somehow balance out his approach to account for that. He relates this metaphor of balance to 'blind spots' which he acknowledges are present whether visibly or less so in organizational practice in the sector, as the demands of competing value sets are attempted to be reconciled. These value sets which pull in both directions signify the aporetic nature of practice in this context (Jones, 2004). He also considers formal Corporate Social Responsibility policies and accreditations for the future as Groundwork Northumberland are a small business and their

responsibility is informal, there is minimal documentation, policies or procedures. From Moore et al's (2009) responsible business practice criteria, I can identify from experience that there is some Governance, with a values statement and profit motive, there is no formalized employee policies or reporting of the kind described in the reporting criteria. Such informality has strong advocates in ethics research (Fassin, 2008), the requirement for judgment without formality may be what safeguards the possibility of ethics, as employees have the freedom to think and act in a non-prescribed way.

We may now consider why Corporate Social Responsibility is of interest to Groundwork UK? Three interviewees have highlighted the reputation that Groundwork UK has in the sector. There is a shared agreement across the senior management team that Groundworks are seen to be dominant by other third sector organizations, government funded and therefore have quite a reputation among organizations in the environmental regeneration sector. The purpose of engaging with Corporate Social Responsibility may be due to the resemblance that this organization has to a large corporate organization as it has become visibly business like in contrast to other organizations in the sector. Seitanidi (2005) acknowledges this shift taking place in the sector. Partner charities of Groundwork Northumberland's have made comments about this reputation in conversations. For example:

I think we've recently had a case where we've erm produced positive publicity and its been *turned around* as something negative erm by a particularly annoying journalist. Erm and that's difficult again because we don't have a dedicated resource to deal with the press and so it's left to individual members of staff. We don't have publicity training you know I think it's quite a difficult situation for us. We're looking to address it with training and a much clearer protocol as to how we deal with the press now. Erm I don't think we ever generate negative press as a trust in Northumberland. I think it can often be interpreted in a particular way. And I think a really good example and it's not just for this trust but I think it's a lesson for Groundwork as a whole. Is that when I started this job, when I left the last one and started this one, I ended up saying to people that I'm going to work for the dark side, you know I think Groundwork has an image problem and also I think that Groundwork has got quite a bad reputation and that makes it quite difficult for individual trusts to be able to work successfully. (Wendy)

I was at a conference launch event a couple of weeks ago. I was having a lunch with a colleague from [NAME] we've invested quite a lot of time

in building up a working relationship and on a personal level we get on quite well, having a chat you know about working together. And then the person says, 'So how does it feel to be working for the most hated organization?' You know and that is the kind of negative image that we have and we have to overcome and that I think that's quite hard.  
(Wendy)

I had quite a definite view of its corporate reputation from the outset which was of a hybrid government quango type thing which was bad at partnership working but quite good at selling its own product. I had quite a negative view of Groundwork.  
(Hugh)

RH: Do you think that has been shared publicly? Would other people in this sector have this view?

Yes nationally I think that is definitely the case and in some areas it is definitely the case. I don't think it is in Northumberland, I don't think there is a sense of having this monster living in your backyard which there is in some areas and that is partly the way that we act and also partly a question of our operational context. So for instance in Newcastle, there is a new Groundwork operation there and there is anxiety among certain sectors which is much much higher, partly because the capacity built in that sector is much stronger that they've got more to lose. From the voluntary and community sectors' point of view it's partly the link to the government that they think that Groundwork has an advantage, that it has extra clout because it has a close relationship with central government and the local government and that is true. It does have a close relationship, which is partly what gives them an advantage and as result in terms with corporate social responsibility, there is an obligation on Groundwork to tread carefully and not to sort of elbow other voluntary and community sector organizations out of the way because it thinks it has muscle to do so. I have to say from the point of view from someone who runs a small trust myself, it doesn't feel like that, it doesn't feel like you've got some kind of steamroller behind you, it feels like just a small business who is vulnerable and struggling just like everyone else.  
(Hugh)

I think Groundwork has been very successful in what it's done and people perceive it to be at the cost of others. Now whether that's true or not I don't know, I don't think it's necessarily true *here* and that's certainly not the feel I get from this trust. But it's certainly obviously people work in other organizations, who've dealt with other Groundwork's and they bring that with them. Erm so seen as a threat erm I think there have been issues nationally about quality and type of projects that have been churned out nationally. Erm and I think there's been an emphasis on quantity rather than quality in the past, and I think that sticks and it sticks forever. (Wendy)

I know what a lot of other organizations in the sector think of Groundwork, they generally there's often quite like erm flippant and I suppose quite jokey references to Groundwork. Erm a lot of I suppose

what would normally be termed your more fluffy environmental charities like [NAME] and that kind of you know the more kind of you can, people can relate to what they do as in its more about conservation and wildlife. And you know I don't know for example, [NAME] at least you know that's about birds. Erm I think often Groundwork is seen as a bit of a money grabber err because of the way we operate and also there can be sometimes cause a bit of prickliness. Because of the fact that actually we get some money directly from government erm that's almost a bit you know especially for those organizations that maybe have to bring in members. But in saying that they're often bringing in different clientele and they're not necessarily working with you know communities that are in disadvantaged areas.

(Laura)

Could this successful organization that has close links with government be considering the consequences of their size and power and the impact this may be having on other organizations in the sector? Jones (2003:24) suggests beginning with asking why a business has interest in 'being ethical'? The purpose of Groundwork North East's (regional office) engagement with Corporate Social Responsibility is not known, but was initiated by conducting the Beta Plus consultation process, as directed by Groundwork UK. It is suggested that a more traditional private sector conception has been adopted, this is evident by the formalized training that each individual trust is undertaking (Beta Plus), which Hugh believes to be mistaken. He describes how Groundwork North East announced a volunteer day instead of the usual company get-together, which was rejected by Hugh because he believed that this was beyond his charitable objectives. Rather than taking action that would be acceptable and appropriate in a private sector context, Hugh believes that their efforts were misguided and that consideration of Corporate Social Responsibility could be about locating 'blind spots' and continually questioning their own practice. Hugh indicates that rather than resolution through Corporate Social Responsibility he may be seeking the demands that pull him in both directions, to fulfill his responsibility, but yet it is this impossibility to find one's way that is the condition of ethics (Derrida, 1999:73). This is supported by Laura's articulation of practising in a way that is consistent with the values of the organization, with a continual consideration of actions as to whether they support the ethical purpose, as when 'ethics is something one does rather than something one has then, this doing is enhanced by the opportunity for debate, discussion and pluri-vocal exchange and dialogue' (Clegg et al, 2007:117). By

Groundwork UK announcing their response to the corporate social responsibility agenda, there were no exchanges with members of staff on the appropriateness of the action, and the suggestion that responses to demands can have a blanket approach. Interestingly though, Hugh was able to decide whether to go along with their suggestion or not, and he chose not to, as did other Groundwork Trusts.

As part of Beta Plus, corporate social responsibility is in there, as part of the assessment process. The regional office for Groundwork Northeast went through their Beta Plus assessment process. They added in corporate social responsibility as an area that needed development and they said what shall we do? Ah a volunteering programme, this is quite a common thing, which will enable staff to volunteer to do some local work, something useful for the local community and all the rest of it. They sort of volunteered the whole of Groundwork Northeast, the trusts, and they put it out to say, this year we're not going to have a staff jamboree where everyone gets together for half a day and drinks coffee and talks about things and stuff. We're going to have a volunteering day, so we're going to ask all staff to come and do this volunteering stuff, whether they were going to go to dig potatoes or whatnot I don't know but they were going to do something useful. And the likes of me said, no I'm not going to do that, because I have charitable objectives here and my charitable objectives say I'm going to spend my resource on my own charitable objectives in Northumberland. I can't just send my staff out one day on x cost to do something else, I have to meet this charitable object, I can't just go and do something else. So there is direct conflict between my charitable object and what the regional office thought was a good idea in terms of corporate social responsibility. The idea of latching onto the volunteering thing was just a mistake. I think the same as charitable giving, it's based on the private sector model, so for a private sector organization and charitable giving, let's devote, out of our profits, let's devote half a percent to charitable giving. Good objective, fine. But a charity can't do that. It's not allowed to give its money away. Volunteering is a similar mistake, you're taking the private sector model so I think for voluntary or community sector organizations, they need their own model on corporate social responsibility which is I think about the kind of things I have mentioned like considering the potential blind-spots in terms of your value systems and your drivers so if you might be environmentally sound but blind to social justice or if your social justice is intact but you're blind to something else.

(Hugh)

We should try and do something locally to be more of a I suppose as an organization be more of a citizen in the community. But then you sort of start thinking it's like that's what we do all the time so I think and then I suppose the other thing is you know we've touched on it things like our erm, well I suppose its erm procurement isn't it like you know and purchasing. It's being responsible about what we're purchasing erm how you just go about your day to day running of the office. I mean to be

honest we have always recycled but in a very very kind of, a bit of a sort of kind of a haphazard way. But now we've got these boxes in each of the rooms so that's started to happen a bit more and people did after the beta plus sort of stuff, start to think about stuff. And we were a bit more concerted about making sure that when things were bought it was, you know like when we took over erm being landlord of the building, you know for example ecover stuff is bought for the you know cleaning. Erm but you know there's a still a long way to go but I suppose you know it would...I don't suppose there's many organizations that have not got any lessons to be learnt or things that need doing.

(Laura)

#### **4.3 What does it mean to be responsible?**

There are issues evident of 'owning' social responsibility in the sector and being cynical towards others actions, especially the private sector. A critique is given of private sector approaches to Corporate Social Responsibility, particularly in regards to genuine responses as opposed to window dressing and hence instrumental and self-interest approaches. As well as the negative manifestations of Corporate Social Responsibility in the private sector, a best practice organization was singled out to discuss, the aspects of the organization that stood out to the interviewee were the ethos, ethical standing and the balance that has been found between business and social responsibilities. The distinction between the first and second organizational examples seems to be how embedded and balanced the organizational approach is to ethics. Fuller and Tian (2006) support this through their finding that it is the embeddedness of the firm within the community that provides much of the basis for responsible business practice within SMEs.

I can remember years ago one of the sponsors for a green link project, which is all about linking schools with local businesses and looking at their environmental practice. It was sponsored by erm aw they're a concrete, what are they called, RJB mining, and it was a bit like this jars a little, you know. And sometimes there is friction in this sector because you know there's funds like Rio Tinto did a fund and I mean they're massively, their ethics are terrible and yet Shell was another one. There was a Shell better Britain campaign and it's like all these companies that'll be the way they're saying we're socially responsible, look we sponsor this. And you kind of think well I don't really know whether they're doing it for the right reasons or are they just is it another marketing thing?

(Laura)

Erm one with decent ethics that lives by them...one that does what they say they do for a start rather than just pretending they do it. (Emma)

I mean probably an example I would probably use that maybe I think seems to have a good, well it certainly looks good from the outside and I don't know whether but Co-op being a fairly good example. And you know they offer ethical funds, for example, that you can invest in in at the bank. They seem to treat their quite staff well, I'm not entirely sure whether that's true because I've never been one, but it is seems that way. Erm they give people choices in their supermarkets to buy you know a range of products that are, I would class as being you know socially responsible. Erm they also do a community fund that in my opinion isn't actually that well publicised. Therefore I'm not sure that they do it for reasons of publicity, I think they do it because that's the ethos of their business. Erm and I think they seem to have got quite a good balance between business and acting in a socially responsible way. Erm and as I say I might have perceived that totally wrong because I've never worked with them and they could be awful employers but it doesn't seem to be that way. And also there's the fact that you know there's the dividend scheme well it's not called that any more is it. But part of that money goes towards this community fund, is given and then they obviously match it up. Erm so they're basically seem to have got quite a good balance between obviously offering a service and being a successful business. But also being you know giving something back and being part of the whole cog, you know being a cog in the whole wheel. Yeh, I think they are quite a good example 'cause there's not many companies who have such a diverse set of a portfolio of things that they offer to their customers and also really I think seem to have a good ethical stand. (Laura)

Another element identified as Corporate Social Responsibility is the idea of citizenship, a synonym that has arisen from the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1999); to be a good neighbour, when considered in the metaphor of balance, we may consider engagement with the surrounding neighbourhood as engaging with an accessible local community.

Erm I suppose yes on one occasion in beta plus training, it was erm brought up then. But more in a sort of erm like an immediate sort of being good neighbours in the village and that sort of thing. Not really on a bigger scale.  
(Lindsay)

Yeah we should be doing more for Pegswood really because it's on our doorstep and we're not really doing much. It would be a really good way to demonstrate what we do, I think.  
(Hugh, Focus Group)

This element is also discussed as 'society results' in the Beta Plus documentation, which is introduced in Chapter One. In the Beta Plus

documents there is a page titled 'society results', the members of Groundwork Northumberland provided responses under two headings; 'done well' and 'areas for improvement'. They consider that they have done the following well; building used by community focussed organizations, fair trade products used in the kitchen, enable work placements to take place in the organization, do some recycling, support local business community and added ethical value to customers. The areas for improvement are listed as; ethically wrong water, not very neighbourly, develop a community support policy.

There is an overarching belief of research participants that responsibility is intrinsic to their way of working. However, when the interviews developed participants starting talking about some of the issues inherent to practice. In particular the tensions present in dealing with the different stakeholders such as landowners, councillors and the community and how to engage with communities continually through their projects. This may be evidence of a genuine response to the other that they serve as this involves 'at least a certain element of not knowing who to respond to, not knowing how to respond and not knowing if your actions have been responsible' (Jones et al, 2005:123). Participants expressed the value of thinking through in the interview, and having some space to consider their practice leading to the identification of areas that needed further development. Participants defined the organization as being socially responsible but highlighted issues that unsettled this understanding for them. The next section will explore these tensions within their practice.

#### **4.4 Boundaries**

I have sensitively identified some of the boundaries that may be considered in the space between corporate social responsibility and the organization, as a means of engaging with deconstruction and Derrida. In doing so, I have followed Jones (2004:54; 2007) suggestion that deconstruction could be extended to a range of 'empirical texts' from organizational life and that:

Deconstruction is therefore not so much a matter of calling into question all boundaries as it is of showing how this or that boundary does or does not hold.



The metaphor of boundaries, has prominent place across the interviews, this is in a number of ways which are discussed in the following section, firstly, purpose and remit, geographical and policy boundaries. Secondly, the bounds of Corporate Social Responsibility, internal tensions and profit related pay. Thirdly, we consider connections between personal and professional boundaries alongside hierarchy and leadership. We then discuss the dilemmas and tensions which arise from these identified boundaries, in relation to stakeholders specifically and introduce the metaphor of balance.

**'Boundary'** can be defined as; a line marking the limits of an area (Oxford English Dictionary); something that indicates the farthest limit, such as of an area (Colins English Dictionary).

Intervening at the limits of a concept means to redefine it...geography can serve as an example to clarify the role played by limits and boundaries in the definition of a concept. [...] Derrida's reflection on the notion of boundary focuses on the fact that a boundary is as much about identification as it is about exclusion. Sometimes the implications of this double function are trivial; sometimes they are not. (Habermas, Borradori and Derrida, 2004:145)

Groundwork has a broad remit for environment-led regeneration or however that's expressed. When you get them together, Groundwork executive directors always disagree about what it is they do. But I think what everyone is agreed on is there is a focus on regeneration that it is environmental in nature, but the boundaries of that are very widely set. (Hugh)

Well, the key drivers for us are that we pursue our charitable mission which like I say is very broad in nature but it is fairly clear to the team and trustees when something genuinely falls outside of it and when something hits it. (Hugh)

The purpose of a Groundwork Trust is considered in the above quotes, Hugh identifies the boundaries which are debated among Executive Directors of Groundwork Trusts, with agreement that the Trust works in 'regeneration' and 'environmental' projects that are 'widely set' while also asserting that it is clear which projects belong in their remit and which projects are exterior to their

objectives. These disagreements suggest a lack of uniformity across Groundwork trusts.

Groundwork Trusts are in place all over the UK. Each trust has a geographical remit in which it will operate. This is usually indicated by the location in the Trust's name. Groundwork Northumberland had already established their patch in South East Northumberland due to the original organization remit, as discussed in Chapter One. Geographical expansion has been discussed in interviews this is anticipated and expected as the workforce of GN continues to grow. The geographical separation of Groundwork Trusts begins to symbolise their 'territory' especially in regards to neighbouring trusts. Due to each trust's operational independence there is not a co-ordinated decision making process which may inspire a more dynamic, conscious awareness of what responsibility means and requires (Derrida, 1995:24). In the interviews there was a sense of the individual boundary of each trust, and that communication with nearby trusts was not frequent and not necessarily encouraged. As illustrated in the diary entry below:

Meeting at [NAME] some anxiety here about land grab from [neighbouring] Trust. Clearly it's part of our Corporate Social Responsibility to work in co-operation with neighbouring Trusts in order to get the best possible deal for local people. But corporate survival is also a key driver, and a competitive attitude from the [NAME] Trust is tending to mean a defensive attitude here.

(Hugh, Diary Entry, 22/08/07)

This diary entry illustrates the 'territory' metaphor, with one Trust being concerned about 'land grab' by a neighbouring Trust. Is it this competitiveness that suggests a Groundwork Trust as converging with private sector practice? The words 'corporate driver' would suggest that, and yet Hugh considers that their responsibility encompasses getting 'the best possible deal for local people', lack of co-operation with neighbouring trusts contradicts this and so there is a tension.

Local authorities provide further geographic boundaries with the state of relationships between the Trust and an individual local authority influencing the ability of GN to work there. There is also the distinction between those authorities that contain communities in need of support or regeneration (e.g. examining communities) and those that may not be as deprived as regions in South East Northumberland, and therefore become policy driven boundaries. There is competition between local authorities over project completions which also applies pressure to GN's remit as illustrated in the examples below:

We've been told by the local authorities do not touch education. 'It's our ball game stay away if we ask you by all means yeh come and help. (Gary)

Erm, so you know the borders are like that and there's people from the likes of Haltwhistle and what's the erm rural district round there Tynedale district is part of Northumberland. We haven't gone in to that area yet and we've been told by the other councils that until we get theirs sorted that they would like us to concentrate more on their stuff. (Gary)

**'Out of bounds'** can be defined as 'beyond the acceptable or permitted limits' (Oxford English Dictionary). Jones (2003) discusses the limits of business ethics and the need to acknowledge the intrinsic undecidability inherent to ethical practice. Is Corporate Social Responsibility beyond permitted limits or out of bounds in the third sector? The obvious and accepted boundaries of the sectors are diminishing (Seitanidi, 2005) and research participants acknowledged several times that there are charitable organizations that are crossing the traditional boundaries as they become more business-like charities. Participants identified their organization in this possibility and considered what this may then mean for their practice in deliberating whether becoming more business like translates into having their own Corporate Social Responsibility. There are some uncertainties in the interviewee's responses, and what may be identified as a trace of undecidability.

We're much more like a business charity than a charity charity. (Emma)

At the moment we're very public sector funding orientated erm and I think we need to in part move away from that reliance erm and look at erm the more sort of private sector model. That's not to say that we're going to become a consultancy but that's more that we're gonna apply for tenders. (Wendy)

So it's kind of those systems and also about becoming a slightly more competitive and commercial type organization. (Wendy)

The longer term funding becomes an issue and it's about sustainability and working with partners to ensure that there is a degree of sustainability. But it's always going to be difficult not just for Groundwork but I think for the third sector as a whole. Because we're so you know funding limited and you know all the constraints that come with that. And I think you know it's been a criticism forever and I think in the foreseeable future it will continue to be especially for the third sector. Unless we become more business like and competitive and then we lose the third sector edge. (Wendy)

It isn't in our business plan but it is in our business plan to engage better with the private sector and work more closely with them and be involved in more businesses and become a more business like operation. And that's an interesting thing because does that mean then we're going to have our own corporate social responsibility? I don't know and we have had a discussion around that about if we're more business like are we gonna have our own Corporate Social Responsibility? And in a way we do because it's an intrinsic thing but I guess an environmental organization...but you know how do you express that, interesting. (Wendy)

This element of undecidability in the status of the organization, expressed by the interviewees words above, may suggest a move to a more corporate approach, and hence, a move away from true responsibility.

**'Bounds'** can be defined as 'something that restricts or controls' (Collins new English Dictionary),

Projects themselves are competing with each other in one way. (Amelia)

Across the interviews there is an awareness articulated that to date GN has focussed substantially on the landscape theme. This is due to the history of the organization, as discussed in Chapter one, therefore the organization has been heavily landscape motivated.

Erm errr the official line for the Groundwork Federation Trust is people, places and prosperity. Erm and I think that's true for GN but I think we have an emphasis on places and less of an emphasis on people and prosperity. And I think that isn't a reflection on our particular preference but more of a reflection on coming from Greening for Growth, which was a very land orientated organization. And so obviously it would be daft for

Groundwork Northumberland to *ignore* that, so we've built on that capacity and now we're looking to build on the kind of places, prosperity type things. (Wendy)

There are some tensions between teams, particularly the land and non-land workers, with difficulties expressed around communication, with a balance being sought through using protocols. The separation into different groups with shared interests links back to Martin's differentiation perspective.

I think in the organization there were tensions and difficulties between the land and the non land stuff and I think that's to do with expectations erm work load and pressure. And just general sort of communication and I think that's been exacerbated by personalities that have now left which hopefully will sort things out. Erm so I think there'd been difficulties there but we've been drawing up some protocols on how to work better together and programming time better. Erm and I think that we're striking a balance now and I think that seems to have calmed down. (Wendy)

Conflict between land and non-land members of staff is exemplified in the interview quote below, as a land team member expresses her frustration with a non-land team member attending an event that is in a land remit.

For instance this thing I went to on Friday now it's absolutely core to what I do but "NAME" decided 'cause he got the original email about it he decided to send two people to this thing and not me. And I was a bit annoyed because I thought he's chosen the wrong two people. In the end the three of us did go, I went because I insisted and "NAME" who isn't really in our area but she's interested and that was his reason for letting her go because "*she likes doing that sort of thing*" and I got a bit annoyed because I thought it's all very well if she likes doing that sort of thing but it's not actually her job". So maybe I'm being a bit protectionist. (Amelia)

As well as the historical background and work team boundaries there is evidence of internal tensions around boundaries of acceptable behaviour, which can cause disruption and conflict, a pertinent example is the language and jokes that are considered acceptable. These responses highlight the difficulties of coping with difference which comes from personalities and team dynamics, complexities which cannot be written down. We may then question the possibility of translating such complexities into codes of conduct as 'ethical decisions emerge out of dilemmas' that cannot be pre-empted by rules (Clegg et al, 2007:112) and instead embrace this more ambiguous place (Martin, 1990).

I guess the unwritten rules are about erm decency towards other staff erm and I think its kind of the team dynamics stuff that isn't really written down, about errr what's acceptable in terms of behaviour, what's unacceptable. And I think that's quite an issue for us because there's quite a diverse cultural background of members of staff that work here and I think where some peoples' boundaries are, err are *miles* away from others peoples' boundaries and that's unwritten. And I think some of the problems I guess we experience in terms of team dynamics is a lack of understanding and *respect* I guess an appreciation of where they are. And I think that can cause you know some difficult conversations about what is felt to be acceptable behaviour and what isn't. And that isn't written down and there is an assumption I think on a lot of peoples' behalf that it's an intrinsic thing and actually it isn't. *Equally* I'm not sure how you would be able to write down what is an appropriate level of behaviour for absolutely everybody because it's so different. (Wendy)

Hugh: Some that cause difficulties are use of language, jokes...

RH: When you say jokes what do you mean?

Hugh: A common one is where, for one person an acceptable joke is another person's unacceptable joke

These internal differences between teams with differing ethos and approaches in cultural sub-groups are manifested in artefacts (Schein, 1992) and are more obvious when visiting the offices of GN. The landscape team work in a light airy office with drawings painted on the walls, the atmosphere is cosy and informal, though sometimes they work with their door closed to shut everyone else out:

Shutting the door mmm I've been doing that lately, when I say our door it is there's three of us in there it's not so *I'm* personally shutting myself away. So people leave us alone to get on with our work, instead of bothering us with paperwork and admin and just general chatting. There's some people are more stressed than others and even the people who say they're stressed still manage to find time for *talking quite a lot*. (Amelia)

The community and education team have a smaller room, are very chatty and leave their door open. The office manager works in a large room with bare walls, on his own, though others walk through his room to get to the kitchen. The separation of GN into themes places distinct divisions between employees, projects and team working.

We may consider how these different individuals negotiate (Smircich, 1983) and place meaning on shared artefacts, for example the van, which may be considered a functional object. Hatch (2006: 194) states 'for those who produce an artefact with a symbolic purpose in mind meaning may be clear and direct, but once others adopt the artefact and thus make it their symbol, they will express their own meanings with it'.

The van was bought through a funding application, when I joined Groundwork Northumberland it was quite new. What then has this van come to represent to different people? My own experience of working at GN was not a happy one, it was a time of great organizational upheaval and a great deal of cynicism and stress was present. The van came to symbolise freedom for me, distance from the office and an opportunity to escape.

Things like the van, if you're going out to a meeting then people should use the van. Do you know what I mean, cause it's the company car type thing and then loads of people don't, he doesn't, and if he did other people would maybes. That's a little thing like he should lead by example type thing and its more and better for the business if people would use the van cause they wouldn't have to pay forty p[ence] a mile for the person using their car. And I don't know if he's ever used it since I've been here so that's quite bad on the business side of things isn't it really? And it's wasteful of resources cause the van's just sat there erm so he does lead by example but not err all the time, rather on everything. (Emma)

The first interviewee expressed that the van was not being used as it could be in the excerpt above and that personal cars were being used to travel instead resulting in a petrol claim needing to be made, and so costing more to GN. This issue was highlighted as a situation in which the leader could be a role model but actually had hardly used the van and therefore others were following his example. The van was used as a symbol in a second interview, in which the van was used to describe the lack of authority exercised by their leader. Gary described how the van had been neglected and when this was highlighted in a team meeting, the leader asked for co-operation and took what the interviewee considered to be a soft approach, rather than ordering a particular individual to complete the task and take responsibility. At the time when I was working at GN there was an incident which involved the van; one of the organizational members was not permitted to drive at the time due to health reasons. I had

been driving the worker to his projects, but on this particular occasion there was no-one present at the office and therefore he took it on himself to drive to his meeting. On return, he was met by a regional manager for Groundwork UK, who began making numerous calls to senior managers about the situation. At the time of this happening, the organization was still neither local authority employed but also not yet formally Groundwork Northumberland. The example of the van unsettles the notion that boundaries place control and order, if one artefact has a different meaning for four individuals then the complexity of the organizational context is beyond that chartered by boundaries.

Returning to the internal work teams' apparent divides, the possibility of profit related pay may be attributed by teams, which is currently being debated, and it is recognised that this may encourage competition and deepen tensions.

I think what potentially could really drive a wedge in all of that is performance related pay. And I think I'm very keen for it not to be personally target driven and organisationally target driven. I think 'NAME' is very keen on that as well because I think that would reinforce that wedge and we would then, would be competing which I think would be a really, really silly thing for us to do. We're not a big enough organization to be personally target driven I think. Erm so I think there have been some tensions in the past I think we're working to resolve those but I think potentially on the horizon there could be some more. And we just have to be quite, well I'm going to be quite clear that I don't want, I'd rather not have performance related pay if it's going to be on that basis.  
(Wendy)

Performance related pay a bit tricky! Some cultural conflict between private and public sector pay sets.  
(Hugh, Diary Entry, 10/09/07)

Can we surmise from Hugh's diary entry that there is a distinction between private and public sector pay in terms of the values embedded in mind sets? Pay is an emotive issue in the third sector and has been articulated by one interviewee as dismal and therefore that she works for such low wages because she believes in her work. There seems to be an assumption that the private sector value is to compete for higher earnings and the public sector approach is more collective and will accept lower earnings in order to work for the 'public good'. One interviewee acknowledged her wariness of profit related pay, in terms of the friction it could cause, and was adamant as a manager, that



she would argue not to introduce it. This entry also shows the existence of these different mindsets and values in GN, and the distinction that could be made between responsibility in this setting and in a private sector context.

### **Personal – professional binds**

Awareness of potential boundaries between personal and professional identities are alluded to across interview accounts. There is an indication that identity construction of a professional, separate from personal values, which may be considered appropriate in a private sector setting, and could be criticised as distancing an individual from the consequences of their decisions, with the notion of 'bureaucrats', is challenged in a third sector context. Jackall (2005:360) emphasises the 'organized irresponsibility' and the disconnection of the 'good of a particular individual, the good of an organization and the common good'. This is implied when participants emphasise that the personal values of the individual seem to be manifested in the way that they conduct their professional lives.

I suppose being in the job I'm in, I suppose I would say I'm from the more sort of caring side of things. (Laura)

We're an environmental regeneration charity and I think that's still very true and something I personally would want that to remain 'cause that's why I work here. (Wendy)

This relationship between personal and professional was discussed by three interviewees, particularly in their personal story and when providing their motivation for working in the organization. There seems to be a deep belief of the connectedness between personal values and professional responsibilities. The community, youth and education co-ordinator emphasises that there are particular types of people that seek to work in their organization:

The types of people that I think come and work for like an organization such as ourselves are people who are generally have a, you know, they come from a background or from a standpoint, where they have morals that mean that they want to, you know help people. They want to make a difference erm and there is obviously the environmental angle to that. Which means that they probably you know generally speaking for example there's probably a push to kind of buy ethically, erm buy organic, you know, it's you know, support people to make a difference in their locality erm and I think that often comes through. But there probably

are certain positions in, I'm not saying this in any sort of arrogant way, but I think just sometimes you know there are certain positions in the organization that maybe just kind of you know, err that post could be with any in any organization. It's not specific to kind of an environmental regeneration charity erm which means that sometimes those people, I think maybe are kind of a bit like they're not; they wouldn't have expected that kind of ethos to be there. Whereas I think its sometimes quite, can be quite a jarring situation because they're maybe used to a certain way of working and like you know I suppose generally speaking we're gonna be a lot more pc in some ways. Like you know certain jokes which, not really you shouldn't be telling anyway but they're not going to go down well because it's just not such a good thing to do, so I suppose that's kind of one example. But you know and also that there's more of a driver to do things that are I suppose have a responsibility to both the community and the environment itself. Because those people are coming from a background where that's what they like to do at home. (Laura)

The personal attributes of professionals that chose to work for GN are also articulated in this quote. A typical individual that has chosen GN as a career choice is identified as wanting to make a difference, having environmental awareness, making ethical purchasing decisions from their locality and having drive to be responsible towards community and the environment because that is what they also 'do at home'. The identity that is painted in this picture is strong from my own experience of working at GN. For example, in the kitchen there are ethical purchasing choices being made with the collection of fair-trade coffees, teas and herbal drinks, there are comprehensive re-cycling facilities. Discussions of family life were an everyday part of conversation, and when weekends were discussed there was usually mention of environmental pursuits; allotments, hiking, cycling or gardening. The interconnectedness of practice at work and home is evident which Jackall (2005) argues is discouraged within bureaucracies. The notion of particular types of people working at GN is supported by other participants:

That's what I liked about this obviously when I logged on to the website there's an immediate catch line or a tag line for people, for places and for community [I think that's it - quietly]. Erm so that was kind of an instant attraction for me which is and like I say all these things attracted me to actually fill in the form to get the job. I didn't expect to get the job [chuckle] so yeh that was it; more geared towards people. (Louis)

Erm yes I guess, I guess we did, yeh I think we did in that I think it's true generally of the environmental sector that you generally get like minded people doing it. And erm I guess in your personal life you tend to surround yourself with people with similar social values and ethics erm

and beliefs and then as soon as you kind of step out of that it's all a bit of a, you know, shock. Erm and I guess in part that's what's happened here, but also there's that kind of natural, you know I'm not really interested in that and so you know I don't really want to engage with it. And you're able to do that in your personal life but in your work life not, erm which is quite interesting and I feel like I've learnt quite a lot from it, it's been quite a positive experience on the whole. (Wendy)

I'm not saying this very well, you kind of follow what you believe to be intrinsically right and what you think is an appropriate level of behaviour or whatever it is. Erm and often I find myself having to *rethink* that on behalf of other people because I apply what's my values and cultural thoughts to other people and actually that's not true. And then I'm often, constantly horrified, aghast at both the fact that I've made that assumption and also that people haven't got the same values as me. (Wendy)

Whereas here [GN] I have to admit that you know there is obviously, that's *respected*. Although in saying that there has been some issues at times, that I think it's just a matter of education. And the fact that there are some job roles that we have that are kind of core roles which maybe those people don't come from a background of having to be, you know, responsible in an environmental way. And so it's about sort of educating that err about educating staff about that and you know err I can respect that, in that people don't always come from a background and an education where you know about those sorts of things. (Laura)

The quotes above while highlighting the personal-professional connection, also indicate awareness of difference. The difference is between those who choose to work for the organization because of personal beliefs and colleagues that work for other motivations and do not necessarily have the same ideals, this seems to be distinct between support role holders and specialised roles. In the interviews managerial and professionally qualified employees were open about their thoughts on support roles such as administration or finance, being less likely to be occupied by applicants focussed on ethics. This could be considered similar to compartmentalisation (MacIntyre, 1977, 1979) and O'Dwyer's (2002) finding that some research participants preferred to keep their personal beliefs outside of the workplace. It was suggested that those in professional roles were more likely to be ethically aware as those beliefs are more inherent to undertaking a professional role, or a role in GN.

When considering the difference between specialist roles and the support roles of administration and finance, I recall my own experience of frustration in the position of office manager. I had chosen to work for this charity due to the

desire to work for a values-driven organization and I felt distant from all other workers as I worked behind the scenes and was not involved in face to face meetings with stakeholders or any of the project work. One interview participant and I discussed this and she acknowledged that I was an anomaly to the office manager's post as usually the position had been taken by someone who differed from the other employees in terms of values and had other motivations for taking the job. She suggested that the support posts could be involved in some detail of the project work in order to communicate the ethos of the organization, and to be more involved.

#### **4.5 Corporate Social Responsibility Dialogue**

There was also a divide evident between the professional and support roles in the organization and the corresponding level of engagement with the interview topics being discussed. Support role holders had shorter interviews in contrast to the managerial interviews, which lasted almost double the length of time. Support role holders also seemed to be unfamiliar with the vocabulary that came naturally to management, for example terms such as 'sustainability':

The core values are to be ethical...in their dealings with people. Erm obviously all this erm oh what the hell do they call it...oh my minds gone blank on the word I'm trying to say, its all the stuff like regeneration and all of that that the worlds looking at, at the moment. (Gary)

I think the project staff would and hopefully the senior management, I'm not sure if the office manager would or the admin staff would so much, but I think so. I think they would have the values that we're an environmental organization and whether they would quote the people, places, prosperity bit I'm not so sure. I'd hope they would say it but just in a different way and I think that they probably would but they might not just spout the Groundwork...doctrine. (Wendy)

A hierarchical division seemed to be present, this was perhaps to be expected due to the meetings that senior management attends with Groundwork UK but even so engagement with discussion around Corporate Social Responsibility was much less forthcoming with the lower level employees. Some were interested and enthusiastic, while others answered my questions in very short sentences. When asked whether they had talked to others about Corporate Social Responsibility, one participant replied:

Not at our level, I would suppose it's sort of like board level and executive level they would talk about it. But err not on the low, lower side no.  
(Gary)

Hierarchy always causes a little bit of difficulty but it emerges from time to time in respect to particular things so at the moment it's a question of to what extent we expect people at a relatively junior level in the team to get involved in some of the higher level questions about the way that we work or the future of the organization. So if we've got a general problem with a partner or funding in a particular area of work then I would expect everybody to know about it and I would expect people of all areas of the organization to contribute something to that debate or contribute something to the solution. Different people have obviously got different personal styles so in the organization, some people have got a very kind of, friendly supportive kind of management style others have got quite an autocratic management style. That leads us to a different issue to the overall culture of the organization so we should be able to accommodate people's different personal styles in the overall structure. (Hugh)

There's a constant process of adjustment going on both in the team as a whole and in individual relationships I think. For instance, recently having started off weekly team meetings with a very democratic way of running them, I decided at one point it wasn't working that way, it was stagnating, so I took a more active autocratic approach to running the team meetings and at the moment that's going ok and at a subsequent date I may adjust it again. We will get fed up of running it that way and we'll run it a different way. (Hugh)

#### **4.6 The devalued "other" (Martin, 1990: 340)**

Throughout my time as interviewer at GN, there was one employee that was particularly different. He was vocal in his disagreement with the leadership style of the Executive Director, he made inappropriate comments to members of the organization in my presence. He stood out. He worked in a support role and had previously worked at the Ministry of Defence differing to all of the other employees that had come from an environmental or social background, he was perceived to be different to everyone else. This was alluded to across interviews but his differences appeared to be accepted whereas in his interview he continually questioned the current way of working:

I look on my role as being a sergeant major to a colonel where the colonel says 'right this is what we want doing off you go'. Can I go and get it done? As soon as I try to get it done I get told you were a bit hard

on them there and my attitude to that is good...because they need it.  
(Gary)

As the quote suggests, Gary expressed his frustration with the way that the organization worked, in particular he spoke of the need for more authority in the workplace. It was evident to me that his work history influenced his reaction to working at Groundwork Northumberland, for example, his use of language in interview; consisted of words such as 'ammunition', 'ranks', 'efficiency' and 'standardisation'. From my interviews with the other members of Groundwork Northumberland I was informed that there were some difficulties between Gary and others, there were situations described to me in which inappropriate jokes had caused offence as well as other misunderstandings. In my visits to GN, I could also notice the difference. On one particular visit I noticed that Gary had a cat screensaver that was carrying a sniper gun, when I asked him about it he went on to show me a collection.

He found the leadership of the Executive Director to be too democratic, not authoritative enough, with a lack of decision making. He was bold in providing numerous examples which displayed leadership weaknesses in these areas. This links in with his own work history and perhaps the leadership style he was accustomed to and also draws attention to his 'otherness' in the situations he describes.

Beta [Plus] (refer to explanation in introduction of thesis) has highlighted the need for greater communication both up and down the ranks. Agreements have been made between team members to let everyone know what was happening in their respective areas on a frequent basis. These sessions are becoming less frequent as team members let deadlines slip and others lose interest because of this. Thankfully one of the Senior Management team has been made aware of the position and is doing something about it. I get the feeling that all the staff members have the attitude "I think it's a really good idea. As long as I don't have to do it."

This whole entry must sound like one big gripe but it has to be said. Today, like yesterday we are leaderless. Not one member of the senior management team at work. How can this be acceptable? Surely there should be one 'responsible' person available, if only for emergencies. It seems that we underlings can be trusted to behave like adults when it suits, but we still have to prove ourselves in anything bigger than the counting of paper clips.

If this is an example of responsibility, I have serious misgivings over the capacity of my leaders to 'deliver the goods', in as much as social corporate measures are concerned.

It is my belief that the responsibilities that are required should be based on firm guidance from above with direction, clarity, aims and objectives being foremost in communication.

Sadly, we have the opposite to this with much of the information passing by the lower echelons.

In conclusion I think that management talk a very good game but do not have the 'bottle' to carry out many of the responsibilities that they are meant to fulfill. Until the keen workers are allowed to spread their wings, many of their good ideas towards improving social status in our communities will be stifled and forgotten.

I live in Hope.

(Gary, Diary Entry, June 2008)

I mean what else are they there for, but to guide in the way that they're supposed to? It's their ideas that they take to the board room, it's not our ideas it's their ideas. (Gary)

He's the boss it's his train you know and I personally don't think he's erm conflictive enough. You know whenever you come up with suggestions it's always 'we'll put it to the team and see what they think' not oh yes I think that's a good idea lets do it. He sort of like asks rather than...and he always sits back and lets other people fight. Yeh, he's not what I would call a decision maker he's not sort of like, I'll give an example. The van was absolutely scruffy I brought it up at a team meeting; now I'd look to my superior to say right whoever did it you know who did it I want it clear by Friday or something will happen. His words were 'well do you think someone could clear it up over the next couple of weeks' now that leaves it open to anybody. As far as I'm concerned he knew who it was, he should have at least taken him aside and said that van needs cleaning, sort it. That's how I would have done it. I suppose the word I'm looking for is I don't think he's authoritative enough. (Gary)

We may re-read this account in light of Derrida's writing on undecidability and consider that what may seem to be indecision to Gary is actually Hugh's engagement with the double binds in which he operates, and though this may seem to be 'weak leadership' from Gary's perspective, we may actually be witnessing Hugh grappling with ethical leadership.

Gary also questioned whether any of the questions in the interview were about 'personal things':

Erm, well you said at the start about personal things and I didn't think really that there was that much personal in it. (Gary)

Is it this perceived separation of interview questions focussing on his work-role from his personal values that indicates the difference between his motivation for working for GN from those that choose to work there as a career choice; highlighting the disconnection that O'Dwyer (2002) identifies. Gary does not agree with the perspective voiced by most members of Groundwork Northumberland, he questions why an organization must pay to do a good deed. This highlights the difference in perspectives from those that come from a background of working in the sector, and someone with experience from a different working environment.

Things like taking stuff to the skip things like that, to recycle whereas you used to just be able to put it in the bin. You know for so many years you used to just throw it out, get it taken away and that's it. Whereas now we've got a box for plastic, a box for cardboard, a box for paper and we've got to take all those separate in the van to the skip and then have to *pay* to do it. And that's just getting worse and worse I think alright its good for the community but why should we have to *pay* for it. If we're doing everyone a good turn why should we have to pay to do it, that's my attitude. (Gary)

The more I spoke to Gary, the more I noticed his frustration and questioned the appearance of him being accepted. In the focus group there was a great deal of tension in the air, and it wasn't so much what was said, but also what was not said. Gary instigated discussion on an issue early on in the meeting, the room went quiet, no-one responded. Then conversation carried on as if he had never spoken. I got the sense that he felt this, after the meeting I chatted to him. He told me of team building days that he had tried to instigate, with no interest from fellow workers. When his diary inserts are read in this context, such as the example below, it seems that he is on the outside, detached from others in Groundwork Northumberland:

'My resistance is low'  
A good song title but not a good frame of mind to be in.  
Having set to work on improving publicity in the building, I have come to a grinding halt through the immortal words "Don't do anything until the whole team discuss it."  
As I do not have an impact on their tasks, I find it, once again, totally frustrating that a straightforward task can be put on hold because one of my leaders cannot find their backbone and make a decision themself.

(Gary, Diary Entry, June 2008)



#### 4.7 Leadership

When others were asked the question, “What do you think of the Executive Directors leadership style in relation to the values of Groundwork Northumberland” half of the interviewees (four) answered with discussion around present issues. Two of them seemed uncomfortable in doing so, one person pulled faces when asked the question and another commented that it ‘felt unfair’ and as if the leader was being ‘singled out’. While they highlighted some issues with the leadership in terms of decision making, authority and communication, three of the interviewees supported their leader by explaining the virtues of his character. This seems to relate to the personal-professional connection that motivates many of the employees to work for Groundwork Northumberland. There was an indication that even though there were some issues around lack of decision making and authority that he was liked on a personal level and personified values consistent with the types of people that choose to work in the third sector as a career choice, and so others were accommodating. This suggests that strong ethical leadership has a different basis to strong traditional leadership.

I mean he’s got strong ethics I’d say he’s not the strongest *leader* as such, he’s a bit weak in that respect, but at least his heart’s in the right place and that’s quite important. (Amelia)

Erm I don’t think his leadership is precise enough erm erm he doesn’t make enough decisions, delays things longer than necessary type thing, but eh basically yes he leads by putting forward Groundwork Northumberland’s ideas and stuff. But erm his personality is not to make decisions fast enough, I think, erm erm but basically he acts as he should do. (Emma)

One interviewee expressed that his perceptions of the organizational values came from the leader, highlighting the importance of setting an example from the top:

I suppose so, do you mean what values I think the organization has? Yeh I suppose that’s where I get my idea of what the values are. (Louis)

Louis's comment above emphasises the impact that leadership has in transference of values (Schein, 1992) and also the requirement of leadership to set an example:

Well yeh, the more people that do stuff the better isn't it, but I think it's the sort of thing you can get away without doing, isn't it. If you're busy like 'ooh yeh we'll do that sometime', 'we'll just do this for now 'cause I'm dead busy' you know it's the sort of thing you can put on the shelf with the intention of doing it at some point. Whether you get around to it, needs someone to say right this day we're all doing this. You know it needs somebody from the top to say, to make a decision but then that, that's the sort of thing that doesn't ever come from [NAME]. He's not very good at saying right, putting his foot down, we're all gonna do this he's not one for saying that. Like we all had a day, erm well we didn't because he didn't say so [laughs] but there was an intention to have a day to clear up the yard outside. Cause there's loads of weeds and all rubbish and stuff collected and stuff and I wasn't at the team meeting but apparently it was talked about at the team meeting and then everybody was supposed to be told that this Monday we'd all give up an hour and help clean the yard. Nobody bothered telling me so I had a fully booked day and there was no information from [NAME] saying look we're all going to do this. Erm so it didn't really come off [laughs], do you know what I mean. So [NAME] was there doing most of it and that's not what it should have been cause there wasn't the direction from the leader, kind of thing you know. 'Cause I didn't even know about it, cause, I wasn't at the team meeting so but that's pretty pathetic really cause you know. So if you're going to do socially responsible things, not that that was particularly socially responsible, it's the way it might have worked, do you know what I mean. Erm it's gotta be set out in the right way cause otherwise it'll not work and then that's pathetic, and so may as well not bother if it's not going to be done properly, I think so. (Emma)

The leader of GN is expected to continue to practice the values of this charity, and therein the distinction seems to be made, between leadership that is considered appropriate or not, even though the leader is considered to be a weak decision maker and perhaps not effective in communicating with staff by some, he is believed to embody the values of GN, and therefore fitting to the job. Could the weakness that's perceived in decision making actually be taking the time to experience the tensions in his organisation?

Well they have these executive director conferences and executive director's meetings and they move around the country. But he took great exception and quite rightly so, one of them was right down in Southampton and he ended up, like you know, and one of them was in quite a posh hotel and he was like, hang on a second this doesn't look very good does it. I've gotta, I think he had to fly and he was like we're

an environmental organization, I'm flying down internally in my country and we're a charity and we're staying in a swanky hotel. And he did actually ask quite, he fed back, that he'd fed back to them that he thought that, that didn't really you know it didn't look very good. And obviously he likes to practice what he thinks is right and you know I'm not sure whether this is, I don't know the background to this and whether this is a conscious decision but when he goes on holiday he doesn't seem to go abroad. (Laura)

#### **4.8 Dilemmas**

From exploring the apparent boundaries of the organisation we may perceive that participants did not separate social responsibilities from the everyday choices, decision and dilemmas of practice. If Corporate Social Responsibility is to be meaningful it can only be so in the context of the dilemmas that are faced by this organisation, which offer an opportunity to consider going beyond narrow and fixed responsibilities towards responsibility that cannot be considered closed (Rendtorff, 2008). Some of these dilemmas originate from the boundaries which are perceived by organisational members, although boundaries may seem to order, and provide stability through limits, it is these artificial limits which mask some of the complexities of these people's everyday practice, similarly to Martin's framework. When people ask questions about the responsibilities of their organisation they illustrate them and understand them through their experiences in practice. The more informed and confident research subjects, particularly those in professional or managerial roles, discussed Corporate Social Responsibility in relation to their small everyday decisions (e.g. which electricity provider to use). Their observations revealed that continual deliberation around even the smallest dilemmas was important to them and uncovered that they believe this is intrinsic to developing an embedded ethical approach.

There are constant dilemmas faced by those working at Groundwork Northumberland, the participants identified two underlying reasons. Firstly, managing the constraints and pressures of working in the third sector, with issues such as funding dependency mean that projects have pressures of time and resource availability. Secondly, the regeneration work undertaken by GN creates continuous and implicit choices centred on prioritising stakeholders. There is acknowledgement of a need to 'reconcile' engaging with those that they are aiming to help (i.e. local community) and those that impact on and

have influence on their everyday practice (e.g. partners, funders, landowners). An illustration of some of these typical pressures and dilemmas is provided through the following example which was given in answer to the question which encouraged participants to tell me a story representing the way Groundwork Northumberland works. It was described by the participant as being typical of the way GN work and struck a chord with me as it resonated with my own experience of working there.

So we applied for this funding we were successful in it. It was a project identified by our partners [local council] as something they wanted us to be involved in delivering. It had a strong community element there was quite an active partnership community group there erm and we had funders' criteria to fulfil. Erm we went and did some basic consultation we had a really really good erm event, it was well attended by over 150 local residents which for a small park was quite significant. Gave the views about what they wanted erm really into it, we then took those views away and it just all got really confused.

There was a big time delay on getting stuff done erm there were problems with erm the right permissions being sought there was miscommunication between us and [the council] erm about planning permission. We asked them whether we needed planning permission erm about a certain element of the project they said no. And then about four weeks before the deadline for delivering the project, before we lost the funding money, it then transpired that we actually did need planning permission because the project hadn't been properly described. We then had to wait for planning permission with deadlines approaching. We had to negotiate with the funders to extend the deadline which fortunately they did erm the person who managed the project left, it was just a nightmare. Erm but we pulled it together, we got it all sorted, we got all the partners, we worked really well, we got the community back involved. The councillors pushed it forward got the project erm got the play equipment installed; toddlers play equipment and we did lots of landscaping works. It's all been finished and I put the funding application in a couple of weeks ago, it's all gone through and they're very happy about it.

I kind of think that kind of summarises what Groundwork are a bit like, in that things start off quite well then a massive crisis in the middle of the project and then by the skin of the teeth we deliver it.  
(Wendy)

The participant's account highlights the precarious nature of the project and the negotiations necessary between several parties in order to complete it. There was confusion in this case between the Trust and the Local Authority, as to whether planning permission was necessary for the project. The councillors of

the local authority then used their influence to complete the project. The dual role of the local authority is suggested, both as partner and councillors as influencers. The funder's position is highlighted by the necessity to negotiate with them in order to extend the deadline for the financial resource. The local community are briefly mentioned, though the words used; 'we got the community back involved' suggests that the community in which the work was due to be delivered had been the least active stakeholder. An indication is given by the significantly smaller role that the local community plays in the story, with the suggestion that the influence lies with other parties, and that the local community does not have influence in comparison, despite the councillors being their formal representatives. The way that the situation is described gives some indication of the power relationships in what is described as a summary of a typical project process. Decision making power is understood by participants to lie with the political players; funders, local authorities and councillors, while the community for which the project is being delivered seems a pacified party that waits for the work to be done. This example while described as typical could be typical only from that individual's perspective. However, the process that is described as typical i.e. the project starting off well, having a crisis in the middle and then scraping success, was also alluded to by another two interviewees. For example:

I think being the size of we, we end up rushed sometimes and sort of having to do things right at the last minute but more or less managing to pull them off. I suppose one of the examples would be...maybes just this weekend, erm pulling together the consultation for it.

RH: So how did the consultation go?

Oh yeh no, it went well we had a good turnout but I suppose that's your yeh maybes an example would be us never being not being one hundred per cent sure that what we're gonna do is actually gonna work. Yeh not having that confidence in what we're putting together, uh hum.

RH: And then maybe being a bit rushed did you say as well?

Yeh and cause you're rushed and because you're stuck for time, you end up you know you just get that feeling of panic thinking oh god, yeh I'd say that happens quite a bit.

RH: And then it works out ok?

Yeh the majority of the time aha touch wood, yeh it actually does work out alright.  
(Lindsay)

The 'typical' project description from Wendy provides a rich account of the dilemmas present in the everyday practice of GN and how they arise from the parameters that need to be thought through in practice. Though it is not clear how the decisions were made, and not explicitly mentioned, it is evident from the way that the story is told that there were difficulties which were struggled with and then overcome. This struggle is described by Derrida and Jones as implicit to responsible decision making, as it is only through enduring this that action can result. When considering Derrida's aporia in Lindsay's answers, there is implicit tension between two determined choices; powerful stakeholders and the local community. This example highlights the interviewee having times in the project when she didn't know what to do and had no procedure to follow. Jones (2003) suggests that the lack of direction translates into a true response that *becomes* after experiencing undecidability.

When asked, 'Tell me about an ethical dilemma that you may have experienced in the workplace' some participants could not identify any dilemmas that they had experienced in their work-role. The first participant was a new employee of GN and as a trainee may not have had to make decisions, the second participant is in a support role and the culture of GN suggests that he is also not in a position to do so. While the last participant, a senior level manager and therefore more exposed to decision making in the workplace, was clear that she had not been torn in her professional engagement unlike others in her field.

Hmm yeh I don't think I have.  
(Louis)

I don't really think I've hit any really.  
(Gary)

Not really no luckily on the whole in this particular job I don't feel like I'm torn ethically. Luckily our organization stands for all the right things. Erm and I'm rarely unlike other landscape architects who might be asked to do a job like doing the landscaping around nuclear power station or something I've never been given anything like that before. (Amelia)

As well as dilemmas of practice there are those that arise from the beliefs and ideology or we could say purpose of the organisation:

*Saints Way*

*Interesting meeting*

I think I may have annoyed [funder], because I couldn't help noticing the gap between 'economic progress' and the needs of faith communities. I can't decide whether this is a great opportunity or a great big Trap.

It points up to the fundamental dilemma, that I hate economic development, but the only way I can get funds for environmental work or social projects is demonstrate economic progress.

(Hugh, Diary Entry 03/09/07)

This insert is set around the clash between a political stakeholder and the executive director. His undecidedness is clear from the statement 'I can't decide' and provides a glimpse of the choices in which his opinion lies; 'great opportunity' or 'great big trap'. This is linked to his deeper 'fundamental dilemma' that economics underpins the work that GN does, the link between the specific incident of annoying the funder, may be an outward manifestation of the tensions that he is experiencing of the deeper dilemma. There is a sense of frustration and tension in this deliberation. As well as the emotion and feeling there is an indication through the tone of the insert that the dilemma is ongoing. There seems no immediate ending in this insert, and no resolution offered to the dilemma, we may relate his position to Derrida's example of Hamlet. Crucially there is an acknowledgement that without the tensions of 'economic development' and 'community needs' the dilemma would not exist and neither would the opportunity to help. We could say that one does not exist without the other in the system in which GN operates. We may relate this to deconstruction and the breaking down of dichotomies and the questioning of logocentrism as without one the other cannot exist, although it may appear to be one pitched against the other, the dichotomy of one opposed to the other doesn't actually exist. Eighteen days later, Hugh makes the following entry. The dilemma is ongoing as is suggested by the timeframe.

Brilliant day –

## Triumph of human value over numbers

(Hugh, Diary Entry, 21/09/07)

There has been an instance of triumph in relation to the tension between 'human value' and 'numbers'. There is no indication given of the details of the triumph. The insert could be read in the context of an ongoing battle, with a victory for one side on this day, yet as we have already discussed there are not sides as both are part of each other. These entries also highlight that for evaluation purposes funders' tend to rely on quantitative data, for example:

In my project the evaluation consultants I brought in tried to [put financial figures on the work we've done] but more in a value for money, linking it and comparing it with like things, like putting a child into care or erm supporting a family where one a parent might have alcohol or drug abuse issues. They were trying to look at what support that would mean and the cost of it compared with the cost that the project was and numbers of families it was impacting on.

(Laura)

Hugh continues by explaining that quantitative data is not the only evaluation method used by organisations to illustrate performance in the third sector, and that focussing on quality of work as well as quantity may give a deeper, qualitative response while also possibly minimising the burden of filling in administration and paperwork. There is an acknowledgement that the demands of funders' are unlikely to change as well and neither are those of their own umbrella organisation. This is frustrating, due to the limited picture that figures provide, only by hearing of individual projects can the richness of GN's work be communicated.

We have to play a numbers game as we have the output burden for funding. Natural England doesn't engage as much in a numbers game, they focus more on quality rather than quantity. Groundwork UK general instruction applies to all trusts, yet some trusts have people particularly for writing the reports, we have only 11 people and the same administrative burden. It's the same with other funders'. (Focus Group, Hugh)

Measurements are also used to give an overview to Groundwork UK, of the Trust's work per quarter:



Well it's now called GPM's; Groundwork project measurements erm basically if we say for instance in the next quarter we plan to plant 2000 trees you know we'll say right that's what we've budgeting for, that's how many we've done. It basically just gives the management an overview to Groundwork UK that we've got to report as a trust.  
(Gary)

As well as the dilemma of representation through economic progress, how can the complexity of the work that is done by Groundwork Northumberland be reduced to simple, mechanistic representations, much in the way that Jones (2007b) highlights the danger of reducing deconstruction to a framework. There are dilemmas of how to use resources, which in the following case involves a choice between making an ethical purchasing choice or having more resources to deliver on the ground.

What I am experiencing at the moment is the dilemma is whether to go for a greener electricity supplier which might cost us twice as much as a non green electricity supplier... ultimately taken to the nth degree that might mean the difference between employing a post or stopping a post depending on having a greener electricity supplier. So do I spend the money on securing a member of staff's future or a particular project or do I spend the money on cleaner electricity? So that's a dilemma I have now.

RH: And do you make that decision yourself or do you put it to others?

There'll be a discussion between myself and the office manager and the business manager and ... who knows we may not have made our mind up by the time the financial plan comes back... probably ultimately it will be my decision, I think and then I will just have to justify that decision.

RH: Ok, you just take the time to weigh up the pros and cons. It's an interesting sort of dilemma really isn't it?

Yes. I think probably the likelihood is that I will come down on the side of greener electricity but I'm just not too clear in my own head, it will need a bit of weighing up. A common one is a human interest from a member of staff compared to quality of project and so, you want to support this individual and you want to continue their employment... but it's screwing up the project, that's quite a common dilemma. But usually you come down on the side of the project and quality of the work even if that means you have to sacrifice the sensitivities of that individual to the projects of the future of the organization.  
(Hugh)

Hugh's use of the following phrases illustrate him grappling with the decision; 'I'm not too clear in my head', 'it will need a bit of weighing up' and involving others in that decision may provide the space to discuss, question and deliberate over the choices while acknowledging that in the end it will be his decision. The dilemma of green electricity or resources for a project worker can be seen as involving a choice around two desired objectives. A future oriented approach seems to be taken by Hugh in discussing a similar dilemma between supporting an individual project worker that is struggling with a project but then deciding that the quality of the project ultimately takes precedence, it is suggested that safeguarding of the future and impact are the reasons for doing so. If we use this criteria to choose between practising what we preach by purchasing ethically or having more resources to safeguard a project, then we may understand the difficulties of choosing between value sets which was alluded to by Hugh when making the distinction between private sector choices and those prevalent in the third sector. Also what may seem a future oriented, long term approach justification in using resources for projects rather than paying for green energy may be misleading. It may seem that more project money secures GN's practice however taking that decision may be considered more short term oriented and taking control of resources. Whereas going against decisions which would safeguard the values and purpose of the organisation i.e. purchasing ethically, could affect the organisation in the long-term, especially when considered in the context of the everyday deliberations that some Groundwork Northumberland employees have expressed as integral to being responsible.

'NAME' sought a permanent position for our trainee. It would be nice to be able to provide, but not really doable. Good example of limits.

Another was the green electricity supplier.

(Hugh, Diary Entry, 12/09/07)

This diary entry was made two months after the dilemma was identified in the interview. Hugh indicates that there are parameters in which action is possible and that it is necessary to be aware of the limits in which action can be taken. Jones (2003) draws our attention to limits while Davies and Crane (2003) highlight precedents set by decision making within a fair-trade context, which

may be the impact of this decision. Other members of GN are also considering choices of being a local citizen and supporting local businesses, which was identified earlier by two participants as their definition of Corporate Social Responsibility in their context, but foregoing resources in order to do so.

We're looking after the building from that point of view because we keep the rents and service charges so light on the rest of the building, with all the sub-tenants, they can then have their process cheap which in turn helps the local community. So instead of paying seven or eight pounds sort of for a roast and all the trimming, they're paying three pound ninety five, four pound, which means that it's good for local business and for a lot of people. (Gary)

This is questioned by one of the participants that strongly advocated being a local citizen as an intrinsic aspect of GN's social responsibilities, in the following comment. She is strongly against subsidising other businesses, this position seems rather different from her stance voiced in her interview, which may evidence that the opportunity to discuss the parameters of being a local citizen as an organization with colleagues in the focus group have led to a refined opinion, or even a shift in her stance on this. She also suggests putting up the rents in their building.

It's no good for our business. It's not good for our business 'cause we're subsidising them, why should we subsidise them, we shouldn't.  
(Focus Group, Emma)

I suppose when you've got pressures about what money's coming in. And how staff are spending their time and you know annoyingly, I suppose in the climate we work in time is money. Erm but then there is another argument around the kind of quality and good practice. That if you are err basically giving that whole impression to your staff, then they're gonna also give that impression to client groups and community groups and whatever, which then surely is about what I said, you should practice what you preach. (Laura)

While pressures are acknowledged and 'time is money' one member of staff discusses the importance of quality and good practice, how this is conveyed in the impression made on 'client groups' and 'community groups' and is about 'practis[ing] what you preach'. This connects to our earlier discussion that focussed on Hugh's choice between green energy supplier and extra resources on the ground, but also the dilemma between quality and quantity which affects

GN when providing information to funders'. These connections provide a sense of the complexity in which these participants are working, and how although extra resources on the ground have impact and may secure longevity of a project, practising what they preach is an intrinsic value. This is expressed through the following excerpt which focuses on ethical purchasing choices when considering their drinking water supplier.

It was noticed it was from Nestle and a few of us were like we shouldn't buy you know. We shouldn't a) it doesn't look good and b) if we're doing this in it's truest sense then why are we actually supporting a company that is in our view is ethically not very sound. So erm individually really it is our individual kind of right to choose whether we buy a Nestle bar of chocolate. But you know as a corporate thing really we should be being responsible about that kind of choice and there was a little bit of friction that occurred as a result. Because economically it really didn't make, I don't think it made much difference, but obviously it was the staff time spent investigating that and sorting it out. One member of staff couldn't appreciate that and why it was being done. (Laura)

This participant links back to our first section on meaning, and reminds us that being 'true' in their approach defined some participants views of Corporate Social Responsibility and what it means to them, as they expressed that it is intrinsic to their everyday way of working. This does not necessarily translate into always making the right choice, what is a right choice when faced with the complexities of choosing between different value sets? But instead ethics being true and intrinsic to the values of an organization is evidenced by these very dilemmas, discussions and deliberations taking place over choices which may be completely overlooked in a different context (i.e. private sector). It is the conflict, communication and negotiation over the purchasing choice which gives the reader a sense of undecidedness (Derrida, 1993) and ongoing considerations.

#### **4.9 Stakeholder Tensions**

An expectation at the organizational level that being socially responsible is embedded in practising that which is valued presents the balance metaphor, and indicates the double binds and pulls of organizational practice (Jones, 2004). Balancing translates into considering daily choices and actions and deliberating as to whether they are socially responsible which involves considering the value sets which are inherent to their work and making effort to

balance their responses. There is effort apparent in continually deliberating, not ever sure that they are fulfilling their values or being truly ethical (ref). It is precisely these undecidable conditions that suggest grappling with embedded ethical actions.

Something else that's...I suppose is making sure that you are being a socially responsible citizen as an organization. Erm and I suppose that's where this difficult rub is, is that some, like I've said before, some of what our ethos is is really what we should be doing, is part of, so really can you class that as are we therefore being any more socially responsible? Because that's sort of what we should be doing as part of and that's what I sometimes struggle with. We have to at least be going 'oh we're doing that' or 'we're working towards that' but that's not necessarily outside of that, is that classed as being outside our core business?  
(Laura)

This participant also expresses that as well as her organizational expectations she is aware of her own choices and actions and how they may or may not embody her intrinsic values:

I think sometimes people think I'm being quite on my high horse 'cause you know I used real nappies at home and sometimes that's come out in situations at some of the [partners]. And some of them are like 'oh you can't always afford to be, you know bring your ethics into it or something'. And I'm like well yeh but then I spoke to one of the [partners] and they were on about doing it themselves and I felt a bit like and they were like 'ooh you do that'. And I said well I can't really, I mean a) I feel like it's a good thing to do. But b) I really feel that I would be a joke if I came to work and hadn't at least tried doing that. When I'm sort of preaching, that I am trying to say kind of right you know, it's a good thing to take your child out into the countryside and green spaces. Use your local environment and there I am chucking nappies into it. But I'm only saying well I think this is good practice I'm not saying you know and it would be good if other people took it on. But I realise that a lot of people you know they struggle enough to get their child up and out and feel confident enough to do certain things in their lives and therefore that's going to be the last thing in their priorities. But it's kind of a difficult it's a balance isn't it? I think there has to be a balance in life. (Laura)

Rather than a normative approach which would suggest others 'should' use real nappies, Laura is aware of the tensions and perspectives of people who may be struggling with other elements of parenting, by doing so she is reaching out and responding to the community in which she works. She outlines that some people respond with the argument 'can't afford to be ethical' and Laura almost

suggests 'how can we afford not to be?' while also considering balancing these difficulties in order to practice what she preaches.

Each have different priorities. Sometimes it is a question of competition for your own time and own resources so each require a slice and so you need to actively maintain a kind of balance there. And that can create tensions with particular organizations and individuals in the organizations that think you should be there for them and you're not. So that's one. There are naturally competing priorities in the distribution of resources and funding.  
(Hugh)

Tension; a situation in which there is conflict or strain because of differing views, aims, or elements (Oxford English Dictionary). The pull, demands and competition for resources from different stakeholders are alluded to in the above quote, in which we may consider the aporia (Derrida, 1993). As well as the natural priorities of resources and funding there are demands from particular organizations and individuals that create tensions, which may indicate the perceived power or importance of some stakeholders over others. Hugh outlines the importance of balance, and we may consider this an appropriate place to start our discussion of stakeholders.

Then there are problems with style. So for instance I might get this wrong, I might be strongly orientated towards delivery and completion of projects and implementation of quality and making sure it's right and all the rest of it, whereas the stakeholder, the other key stakeholder involved, might be more orientated towards, 'I need it by then, Don't worry about anything else, I want it then'. Or they might say that implementing it is all very well etc but what we need is publicity profile and that's what's not done and I'm really pissed off. Another quite common one is areas of development of the work and competing interests in a stakeholder so for instance, very commonly, you will get called off site by a councillor with their own particular political agenda or who has got pushed by somebody else and one of the common problems is a stinky letter into the newspaper so you know, you were doing perfectly well with such and such a project, it was going well, you were doing what you were supposed to be doing and you thought it was all ok. Then a stinky letter into the newspaper, councillor goes off on one and the officers of the organization then start biting back as people do.  
(Hugh)

A sense of juggling the demands of different stakeholders is given by Hugh, indicating an active enactment of aporia (Derrida, 1993), as each has their own agenda which is negotiated in a project. The change that can occur through a project is emphasised as in this example a 'political' stakeholder reacts to

public opinion expressed in a newspaper. Rather than continuing to focus on the delivery of a quality project, the parameters of the project then change through interactions with the political stakeholder and GN have to adapt. When the dominance of the political stakeholder is challenged, Hugh states:

RH: How do you know that the councillor's viewpoint is representative?

I don't know for sure but it is my operating assumption so unless I've got very good reason to think otherwise then that is my assumption. There are two reasons for that, 1) it has a firm structural base i.e. this is an elected individual, there has been a formal democratic process and they're there, and 2) is the stakeholder base. I can't afford to favour some other kind of community perspective than the councillor because ultimately the councillor will fund my organization. He's a formal stakeholder and I'm not really going to go against them. (Hugh)

The councillor is considered to be representative of public opinion, due to the elected role and the influence over allocation of funding results in GN, therefore favouring their perspective over other community perspectives. The influence that this stakeholder holds leads to Hugh defining them as a 'formal stakeholder', Webley (2006) uses the terms stakeholders and interested parties; separation of types of stakeholders suggests the offsetting of some and the prioritising of others. We may question this distinction between formal and informal and the holding of powerful stakeholders at the perceived centre while the local community remain off-centre. Derrida reminds us that in response[ability] there is response and that 'responsibility without relation to an Other makes little sense' (Jones et al, 2005:122).

The word stakeholder set in the third sector context may be troublesome as Hugh explains, when discussing my use of the word stakeholder in the research report provided prior to the focus group:

Right I get it, that explains why stakeholders are featured in here as well, cause I was thinking well yeah, again it's one of those things about if you're a voluntary sector organization stakeholders can be a substitute word for shareholders and if you have shareholders in the private sector, then clearly your stakeholders are a different group. In our case it's not so clear.  
(Hugh, Focus Group)

The complexity that has previously been discussed in relation to competing value sets in this context can then be considered with stakeholders. Hugh considers the concept of stakeholders in the private sector and notes that there are clear distinctions between shareholders as a prioritised group and stakeholders. He then questions how to prioritise stakeholders in a third sector setting, as the competing demands from stakeholders can be viewed similarly to the competing value sets. It is this complexity which cannot be bound even by the distinction of formal and informal categories and powerful and less powerful roles, as the marginalised, silent community is present in the background even if in the shadows. Kakabadse and Rozuel (2006) find that a stakeholder conception of Corporate Social Responsibility has meaning in a public sector hospital, but that dialogue is a crucial element.

It is anticipated and acknowledged across the interview accounts of those working in the field that in their working practices, tensions exist in managing and prioritising stakeholders; local councillors, land owners, funding organisations and local communities, in particular. There is continual awareness of prioritisation of political stakeholders; local authorities and funders and frustration with their own perception of landowners and councillors having more influence over projects and in some cases final decision over that agreed by the local community.

“There are actually real problems with the different parties because like the land owners don’t necessarily want what the community wants. In the end...if the land owner doesn’t want it, it doesn’t happen. And also the local authority has to manage the scheme at the end of the day so if the community wants something that’s a bit ambitious or hard to maintain, then you know in the end it’s the local authority that also has more of a say than the community.” (Amelia)

In this interview quote it is evident that the interviewee is aware of the tensions between the community and landowners, the community and the local authority. The power of these two parties limits the choices of the local community and indeed the practice of GN, as a project is deemed too ambitious or difficult to maintain then it is shelved. Derrida (date) may state otherwise, as by having two pre-determined parties that lie in tension, then there is ability for action. This ties to Hugh’s dilemma earlier over funding, when it was noted that



only be engaging with these powerful stakeholders is there a possibility of fulfilling projects. I recall Amelia, spending many hours developing a design out of clay for a project which was going to build earth mounds as an area for children of a community to play on. The proposal was accepted by the local authority, children from the local community were involved with the design and the project was developed. In the latter stages due to the nature of the design the local authority withdrew its support, as the earth mounds were particularly disliked by the leader of the maintenance team. Maintenance did not approve looking after the finished project and due to that the project was cancelled. As the following interview excerpt describes:

Yeh, we wanted to do erm in fact we got the money from Big Lottery for it. Erm we wanted to do it was a youth sort of play area and it was not using sort of traditional play equipment it was making earth mounds. And we had, we had one member of the local authority say that we didn't, we hadn't got the funding and then we found out from another party that we had got the funding. But he basically said he didn't want to *maintain* the actual piece that we were gonna build but that's not what he actually told us so... (Amelia)

Amelia has since left GN, and the project subsequently went ahead, after approval by the local authority, without her knowledge and she suggested without any acknowledgement of her effort.

When interview participants were asked, 'Tell me about the stakeholders that you perceive in your work that are important and how you prioritise them?' the complexities of how to place importance and priorities are evident in the following responses:

I would never prioritise them anyway I don't think because I think everyone should be treat[ed] equally. Like say you had a small school on a small project and the teacher you're dealing with then you had a councillor from the county on a bigger project I just think that each deserve equal importance and one should not have priority over the other. (Lindsay)

One participant describes being 'pulled in different directions', which is highlighted in the following:

Yeh that does happen quite often uh hum, but it's usually being pulled for by the reasons rather than sort of being pulled towards someone's

status or influence, that sort of thing. Erm and also pulled towards one stakeholder because their aspirations are the same as Groundwork's. For example we had a meeting once for [NAME] and it got quite heated cause we're putting in a new rugby pitch in there erm and one fella on the steering group wanted a sports centre building instead. One that would charge for people to come and use it erm and I made the point that it would be going against our organization because we would want to provide facilities for the whole community and by charging people you know you would be sort of limiting who could use that facility.  
(Lindsay)

Often when you well all the time when you are putting in a physical development you have to have the local communities on board in *theory* to be able to push it through. That doesn't always happen, there's always going to be difficulties I think between local councillors, local people, everyone has different wishes themselves and reconciling them is an interesting challenge I think. Erm however I think we're quite, I think the land team are very good at doing that and I think we have been very good at it in the past with very specific communities. And I think the difficulties arise when that contact, that very small scale contact is widened out, people's job roles expand and so they're not able to give that particular community a great deal of support. Erm so I think difficulties will arise there and it's how you deal with that and how you communicate that that's going to happen, I think that it's something for us to work on. Erm we are quite effective at stakeholders in terms of partners...I think traditionally we're very good with stakeholder local authorities.  
(Wendy)

Who are GN's stakeholders? The responses given indicate they are numerous; councillors, funders, local communities, local authorities and partners.

The first quote indicates belief in treating all stakeholders equally, and this is evidenced in practice in the second quote when the choice is made to support the action that was in line with GN's charitable objectives. However, the third quote elaborates on the difficulties that are present between the different groups of stakeholders. The community (labelled customers or end users by some participants) seem to be a less powerful stakeholder when considered alongside funders, landowners, partners and councillors; 'you have to have the local communities on board in theory'. Towards the end of Wendy's viewpoint on stakeholders she dwells on the successful relationships with both partners and local authorities, local communities are felt in the absence of words representing them. Community buy-in is what is important according to Amelia, she views engagement as a means to an end, which is done in order to receive

planning permission for projects. Nevertheless, community engagement is recognised as an aspect of responsible behaviour.

Well we have different methods and I'm not always 100% happy with what's been done. Even when you think it's effective and it's worked, we got something through planning and all it takes is one person to stir up the community because they don't like it or they were on holiday when the consultation event took place or whatever. So I don't think anything works one hundred percent there's always something that happens, they don't like the colour or they wanted to design it themselves. (Wendy)

When we collated all our stuff from the community events, there is so much conflicting stuff there that in the end you do have to make decision that's somewhere in the middle or it's a compromise and not everyone's happy anyway. (Amelia)

Some of the difficulties of engaging with the community are outlined here.

There is an awareness articulated that they cannot engage with all members of the community, and that there are frequently negative responses even when many resources have been used to conduct different strategies of engagement. This is due to the need for compromise as for example, when asking community members for their thoughts on what they would like to be done with funding for their play area there are 'conflicting' responses which cannot be reconciled. These conflicts that cannot be reconciled and pull participants in different directions could be seen as the uncomfortable experience of undecidability (Derrida, 1993), and yet it is this grappling and pulling that affects employees of GN deeply. The following example provides an indication of some of the other pulls and pressures in their projects:

Right I'll give you an example of this, [NAME Park] they've asked us to err put ...in a play park and make it less dangerous for the kids because there was a lot of hard concrete, you know blocking from old buildings which they've turned into a park. What we've done there is one the land team and the community team as it was they went knock, well they put a flyer through everyone's door asking them 'what would you like to see in your park' you know 'what can we do about it this is how much money we've got have you got any suggestions'. And erm we're now going ahead with it, the poor little kids are distraught at the moment because they're not allowed you know they're off at the moment and they're not allowed to play football in the park because it's now a construction site. Unfortunately we are not the head agent, there's three different sets of contractors and its [NAME] council that's doing the job. Of course this bit has still got a couple of hard standings so what they're trying to do is dig it up, fill it in and sort it out. The kids aren't happy. But the parents were

the ones that were asked and I believe there was only about thirteen percent of the forms that were handed out that got sent back. Now you'll probably find that the people that didn't send them back are the ones that complain its sods law all the time. And that's the sort of thing you know you can't really do much about, we've actually asked them to send the things back they haven't and so we've had to go ahead with what the other people've said they want. For instance about three weeks ago "NAME" went to the park there was some bloke come in said 'what are you's doing this for, we didn't want this', she turned round to him and said 'did you send your form back', 'what form'? Said 'well we put a form through every person's door on this estate', 'oh well I haven't got time to read them' and she says 'well that's why, you know'. And he didn't have an answer. But what we'll be doing is sending another one when it's complete and say 'is this what you's wanted, do you think it's been worthwhile improving it, are these improvements do you class them as improvements?' Well if they turn round and say well we're not happy we'll say 'well what were your ideas and why didn't ya, you know, why didn't ya send something back in the first place'. And basically customer satisfaction is one of the things on beta plus if we're not coming up with the goods, what would they like to see there. You know we may have a little bit of money left which might just change it round to what they want but as I say we're not the main partner we're the planners but we're not you know the deliverers. As I say you can only work with what you've been given. You know as far as I'm concerned, if somebody doesn't send the form back then they're not interested. You know they were given a month. Even if people are on holiday then they're not away for a month. (Gary)

The issues in this example seem to be the method of engagement, leaflets were used predominantly with a low return rate and planned to be used afterwards to gain feedback. Might another strategy be more engaging? Face to face contact may be more effective in gaining some depth of understanding of the community needs, as there seems to be a distancing from the difficulties inherent in engagement with the local community. The exchange between the project worker and the member of the community is framed as a negative exchange, what if the man who approached could not read and therefore had no opportunity to respond and no answer when it was pointed out that he received a leaflet through his door? The intricacies of engagement may always be complex, with some balancing necessary. While the frustration and negativity which occurs through community engagement is apparent from some GN employees perspectives, two interview participants had been placed in positions in which their voices were overlooked or manipulated. This strengthened their conviction of the crucial necessity of community engagement and the need to engage in different ways, in order to capture the voices of

those that are not easily represented but also the impossibility of it at the same time.

That's another issue it happens all over the place. When I was a student this was happening we did a workshop in Sunderland and we got involved in a live project and we were sort of split into groups and I could tell that the group I was with was represented by two retired men who completely dominated and didn't let anyone else have a say. That is just so typical, that's why I feel bitter about it...not bitter, I don't feel bitter but I just feel a bit negative about it and like, yes I do feel a bit cynical, but we have to consult them and we have to get a good resolution out of it, which is quite hard. (Amelia)

Erm I was working in a village where basically the, it was linking in very much with the like sort of community partnerships I suppose. And sitting on that group was a local councillor, who was extremely opinionated and obviously had quite, *felt* that he had quite a lot of control. And he erm he didn't like the way the rest of the community were wanting some project to develop and erm didn't like the way erm things were moving and the links I was developing with other county councillors. And also erm the role, the things that were developing, basically the relationship I was starting to get with some of the young people in the village. Basically he, quite, I felt quite publicly humiliated me in a meeting erm but I felt quite powerless. Because obviously the way that Groundworks are set up means that we have to be careful how we speak to and relate to councillors for example. Erm in that its almost like we're working for the local authority in some ways because and I suppose really if you are in that position in any organization there's a level of respect that has to be had but I would see that that has to be mutual. And I felt that he didn't respect me and therefore he used his power and he used his, and I felt that that was wrong and really he was, he was erm using his position to, for his own ends and I thought that was wrong.

You know you do tend to get the same old people at these types of things. And they're people who *are* confident, who are people who tend to express their opinions quite readily, they are people who *like* going to those sort of things. And I mean I don't know you know I'm, I would describe myself err you know I've got a degree, I wouldn't say, I would probably say I was average sort of intelligence or whatever and I wouldn't maybe choose to go to those sorts of things at home. Whether that's just because it's kind of a bit of a busman's holidays but the other thing is really, that really you have to be quite driven to do that sort of thing to go and do it. And also because of commitments it's like difficult and therefore I'm sometimes wondering whether we need to also, there's an element of our sort of community consultation that maybe needs a little bit of sharpening up. You know like you know not just putting leaflets through doors but holding little focus groups, holding little meetings, open meetings, you know really making that dialogue with the man on the street so to speak. And I think that that's an area we can

probably you know [pause] knocking on doors and saying hi we're here, which you know I think it is really labour intensive and I think we just need to be more aware of that when we're doing projects in communities. (Laura)

The opportunity to make 'dialogue with the man on the street' is emphasised in the above extract, Laura acknowledges that differing methods need to be used in order to capture someone other than 'the same old people', those that are not driven to be involved but are just as important. She emphasises making personal contact is crucial while considering the resource issues involved with doing so. We may consider that Laura's response expresses true response[ability], a willingness to meet with the other that is unknown in every sense (Jones et al, 2005). For one participant her job was 'grassroots' and focussed on the local community. She expressed that strongly in the following excerpts:

Well erm I think the volunteers are extremely important because they're the mechanism for me to do a lot of the work. Do you know what I mean? So of it I think they're a definite priority cause if I didn't have them I cannot do the work really so they're a big priority I reckon. And erm and then the next priority is probably the community area partnership who decides the work that we do and stuff like that. 'Cause they're the ones, you know, they're the community if you like, the representatives of the community that we're working in. So and then I guess it's the landowners last, oh mind you there's the councillors. Mine's a definite grassroots project. It's not something I've had a problem with, stakeholders really, only in terms of like finding out who owns, the land, that's probably the most difficult thing, but then that's just something that's got to be done. It's not like a conflict type thing to deal with, erm I don't really think I've had any to be honest. It's all gone quite smoothly. Yeh well it's probably to do with the way I work, you know keeping everybody informed so everybody knows what's going on, cause that's pretty important isn't it. Erm so I think that's probably why. (Emma)

Throughout the organization steps are being taken to formalise engagement, in order to receive feedback on projects to be fed into marketing and publicity as well as including community input at the start of the project.

We then set up questionnaires saying 'right this is what you asked for are you still happy with it?' We'll do the project and develop the area then afterwards we'll put another one in saying right are you still happy. That way we find out you know have we got our targets, yes or no, and we'll also be raising questionnaires for the people who have worked on it as well. Because obviously you have to keep them happy as well that's another part of the beta plus, that's one of those err people results. (Gary)

We're setting up community compacts so that we've got an agreement at the beginning of the project of what we're going to do and it's what the community want. So we can monitor that throughout the project erm and then at the end of it, all parties sign off. At the end I think community work is often the hardest because peoples' interpretation of things are completely different erm and all kinds of personal you know agendas or wants and needs and desires come in. On both behalf's you know, so I think it's quite important to get that in so we're working on that at the moment.  
(Wendy)

The community compacts may impact on current engagement methods but it is unclear whether this will be a positive impact, the compacts suggest a simplified and fixed response to the other. From the participants that value community engagement we hear calls for more personal contact and creativity in connecting with the 'man on the street'. The compact suggests a formalised engagement that while possibly increasing the points of contact may reduce the difficulties of engaging with those that are unrepresented at present (Mintzberg, 2008). There are also difficulties of funding and resource issues which continue to impact on the means by which GN can engage:

RH: Right erm moving back to local communities. How do you communicate to them your decisions and actions?

Very badly I think is the frank answer to that. I think particular specific projects were better erm but not brilliant. I think we engage with people but then have a tendency to leave them hanging. Erm we have a tendency to come in and install erm undertake environmental regeneration work whether that's playgrounds, planting or footpaths and then come out again. And in part that's a reflection on the way that we're funded, you know, we only have a certain capacity to do projects, they only have a [illegible] resource that we can use. Erm once we've delivered on that we don't have the resource then if it's not in that project to be able to remain in that community after that which may make them feel let down. So I think that's an issue, hopefully the community compacts will come some way to address that. Because it's written down and it's quite clear then, at the outset, what we can and can't do, what we will and won't do erm so I think that in a way will address that.

We're not particularly good at publicising our work erm in a positive manner and I think that's something I've been working on in the last few weeks about publicity and marketing. Erm but Groundwork overall as an organization isn't particularly about promoting its work to the general public, it's more about promoting its work to partners, stakeholders and funders and stakeholders hasn't necessarily meant the general public. So I think there's an interesting debate between the wider general public

and specific community groups and how you engage them all. I don't think we do any of it particularly well, I think we will do it better with the dedicated resources on the ground. Having said all that I think in [NAME] where we have a dedicated resource to work particularly with communities and environmental green space *we're excellent at it.*  
(Wendy)

#### 4.9.1 Frustration with Community Engagement

Tensions between professional integrity and inherent beliefs about community engagement were present for one participant. She felt frustrated by the fact that involving the community led to an undermining of her professional responsibilities which she considered to be producing innovative designs. She expressed that community engagement was demanding and impacting on her professional parameters, due to the increasing involvement of local community input at the design stage of projects.

The other thing which I actually personally find quite hard is that you try to do something interesting and innovative and they just aren't interested. They, they want the same old stuff, you know like a miner's wheel, a pit wheel as an entrance feature or an upturned boat filled with bedding. Every time! (Amelia)

Who would have thought I'd be so negative about it cause I believe in the community having what they want. But then I also do believe that there are people who are qualified to do things and skilled at doing...like doctors I wouldn't *dream* (high pitched) of...like trying well I do try to find my own ways of solving my own health problems but you know when it comes to certain things I know that doctors have that skill and I don't and it's the same with solicitors or whatever. (Amelia)

Well it is because they can be the cause of a planning application not going through, (RH: absolutely) that sounds a bit selfish doesn't it. I'm just feeling a bit negative about the community at the moment (RH: ok) and yet more and more these days the community have to have a say and I don't always, and a lot of times they want to design it themselves and I just don't think they've got the skills and the know how and some of them think they have and haven't. And part of the reason we're employed is to, cause we we've got qualifications to do the job and not just qualifications but experience. And it sounds a bit elitist but sometimes we *actually do* know better. (Amelia)

I actually think it's I have a responsibility to ensure that we produce good innovative design as well and that's not. You often don't have time for that and I think time needs to be given for that and sometimes we do need to stick our necks out even if it does cause conflict. But then of course then we don't get planning permission cause someone complains.



I suppose I mean complaints or someone putting a petition against something we do because it's too innovative. (Amelia)

Community engagement was included in the Groundwork Northumberland research report that was circulated prior to the focus group taking place. The questioning of whether community engagement was a Corporate Social Responsibility issue also occurred in the focus group, though this theme had also been brought up repeatedly in interviews:

RH: So is community engagement not as much of an issue now?

Amelia: We've got someone in post now.

Hugh: Well kind of yeah, I think in terms of the general development of the organization it's still an ongoing work, it hasn't gone away it hasn't it's not fixed. Erm but I don't know that it's a corporate social responsibility issue, it's a kind of smooth running of the organization issue and what's the next stage of development in regards to our community consultation skills systems?

This exchange suggests that engagement is not a pressing issue, but we may consider that this becomes more urgent as strategies and policies are put in place, in fact Amelia declared that at the time of interview community consultation was an issue, but is not anymore. It seems that the community compact and systems that Hugh refers to places the members of GN in a safe place with protocols to follow and therefore simplifies the complexity which is present in the examples we have discussed. Although there may seem to be a simpler position when using these protocols it is similar to discussion on codes of conduct in that it takes away response[ability] and replaces it with order and stability, as codes of conduct are not enough (Webley and Werner, 2008). It is evident from our discussion that exchanges with the local community are comprised of frustration, chaos, ambiguity, dissatisfaction, tensions and dilemmas and this suggests the undecidability (Derrida, 1999) in the midst of responsible decision making. We may question in which direction GN seems to be heading with the proposed systems and compacts and whether this path will meet and engage with the presence of the 'Other'.

#### **4.9.2 Staff as Stakeholder**

Hugh identified staff welfare as an issue that was affecting one particular team in GN, in his diary insert. However, when commenting on the report, in the focus group, he challenged the idea that staff welfare would be a Corporate Social Responsibility issue. This reaction contradicted his own entry of it as an issue in his diary inserts prior to the meeting, a diary which was given with the purpose of noting down any thoughts, comments or questions on Corporate Social Responsibility since interview. Therefore inserting staff welfare in the diary can be interpreted as placing staff welfare in the realms of Corporate Social Responsibility. What could be the reason for the difference? Staff welfare perhaps operated as a taboo subject for the organisation to discuss together? Perhaps because it is considered a senior management issue or is seen as a direct challenge to leadership effectiveness? After the focus group had taken place, the last diary participant sent me her entries, one of which stated:

Looking after your staff properly is also Corporate Social Responsibility and having good maternity leave/sick leave etc. Not really thought this was Corporate Social Responsibility before, but now I do.  
[Emma, Diary Entry, July 2008]

The not knowing that Hugh expressed does not necessarily mean a veto of that issue's connection with Corporate Social Responsibility, Derrida discusses undecidability as possibility for action, and therefore the expression of the unknown can be considered as an opportunity to take action.

#### **4.10 Impact**

Impact was a word used in different ways across the interviews, in both positive and negative ways, in answer to 'How would you describe a responsible organization?' Hugh replied 'I suppose I would say it is aware of the impacts that it has, intended and otherwise, and takes action to correct negative impacts'.

The purpose of GN's work is to have impact on people and places in order to 'make a difference'. Groundwork UK's strap-line is 'people, places and prosperity' which was recited to me by a number of interviewees.

The community is now developing to a good extent, we're getting people actually, we're helping them to help themselves basically and they are actually developing trust in us as a trust, to go out, do a job in an area. (Gary)

I think It's a difficult erm sector to work in cause you constantly feel like you're losing the battle but there are small, you know there are rewards on the ground. And I think erm for me that's you know what it's about to feel like you're making a small difference even though you can kind of get tired of the overwhelming negativity that you get with the environment sector anyway. (Wendy)

We need to make an impact on their lives don't we, as part of our aims and objectives and like programs of work. And it doesn't really...well to me I know there is ways of, even if through sort of erm you know, the ladder of participation or whatever you can have elements of tokenism and levels of lip service. Which I suppose if you're gonna have a hierarchy to it erm then certain levels of stakeholder are gonna perceive that we've made an impact. But ultimately it would matter to me whether that community or that set of people felt that we'd touched their lives, that sounds really cheesy but you know what I mean, made a difference. (Laura)

Some people think that what we do or what we've done is a waste of time, some people are very negative about it but a lot errr hopefully the majority of people on that end of it you know the end users are pleased with what we've done. (Louis)

One participant recited a story of how GN's work had impacted positively, the interaction between the interviewee and the member of the public seems personal and unexpected, and stands out among engagement stories as a different encounter to those which have been previously discussed :

...there's one that is very heart-warming at the moment that I had like. It's [NAME's] project which she's on at the moment, the [NAME] school. We went to see the headmaster and he's camp as Christmas but he's great, he's very, very flamboyant. But he's just a little guy and he's so good at what he does, you know. Erm we've been out a few times now to see him and he just cares about the kids you know and he's so, he's not like a headmaster headmaster, he's jogging bottoms and a sweatshirt headmaster. And kicking the footballs around and stuff, he's brilliant honestly if you met him you'd be in stitches. But I mean we walked in there to do a project there's a bit of their playground that is erm it used to have one of those hideous mobile classrooms on it and they've since taken that away. It's really just a bit of sort of scrubby land really and they wanted to do something with it erm and we got involved with [NAME] who's another outside person who deals with landscaping in schools I think. I can't remember what the full title is, so we kind of got

involved with her, she finds funding and things as well, we went to go along to this school and try and help out. And we went in, as soon as we met him, you know I thought he was going to cry actually and he just before we'd actually introduced ourselves he just started to thank us instantly and just thank us for even bothering to go along to a meeting to speak about [NAME] first school I think it's called. Erm and then we were kind of like 'this is what we do' kind of thing and he was cause they're right next to another school which apparently get all the funding and get all, they get all sorts of things. And I don't know whether it's a special kind of school I don't know if you'd still use that term anymore but I think it's something along those lines and there's other schools and apparently [this school] is the one that's, well I don't know if it's a bit rougher or whatever but you know they don't get as much attention as the other schools. Or at least that was kind of what he said so and we're doing this whole kind of area now and it looks like it's gonna come off you know with the work that "NAME" done to get funding and they have got a certain pot of money that they're putting in. And we'd gone back in when [NAME] had done the designs and again he was just so emotional about it. He was just so, it was just great I wasn't even part of the meeting I was just sitting at the side and he he just kept repeating you know 'this is amazing', 'this is amazing' you know. "NAME" went out and did some consultation with the kids to get all their ideas down and he was filing through it and he was nearly crying you know just looking at it. Saying 'Oh yeh he's a little rotter', 'he's a little so and so', 'oh that's great' and for him to be just so pleased and just so emotional about us doing something for poor old [NAME] as he called it. I felt that sort of thought summed it up, that made me feel great. As I say I've barely done any work on the project it's just that was really good, really really positive. (Louis)

However, when a mistake is made then there are big impacts on communities, with the potential involvement of local councillors, and inevitably impact on GN's reputation, for example:

A certain member of staff has sort of recently oh well he's he has basically committed us to do things which we're not physically able to do for, for them the community and local authorities and then it's had a knock on effect when we've not been able to deliver it. Erm he's not communicated very well in the team and so we've missed some deadlines which has really caused a bad reputation for our, well sorry, caused a problem for our reputation. He's let contractors go on site when he was told not to cause of the weather so it's had an effect on the actual ground. Erm they're the main ones, well that's really all but they're quite major. (Amelia)

The local community don't care about which individual was responsible for not doing something they'll equally blame someone else, whoever goes to meet them gets it in the neck really. Particularly "NAME" she's had god it didn't matter what she said this bloke was saying oh I thought

you'd say thought well that's typical isn't it. You know he wouldn't accept anything, he complained about having something and then not having something something that "NAME" designed. "NAME" was supposed to have done the consultation on it he came back and said the community were happy with it but they actually weren't. (Amelia)

In answer to the question what do you think is important to this organization? Reputation is considered in terms of political stakeholders, Hugh discusses being 'seen to be making a difference' as a local councillor has asked about the work they do locally. 'Being seen' suggests a lack of true engagement, which corresponds with participants views on corporate responsibility. While Gary discusses the role of local councillors as evaluators of projects and considers their judgement to be crucial in deciding whether it is a project that is needed or appears to be needed. From our discussion of political stakeholders it may seem that this does not capture the intricacies of the influence that councillors have over Groundwork Northumberland's work, particularly in 'representing' communities which in some cases translates into 'talking over' the voices that most need to be heard.

Erm community (pause) buy-in erm and local authority buy-in really 'cause often they're the ones that have to manage what happens once the scheme's finished. Erm sustainability in terms of the project being sustainable and erm also using sustainable methods and materials. Erm our reputation I guess we've had a few knocks there recently. (Amelia)

Yeah, we could do a demonstration for partners as well that we make a difference, be seen to be making a difference where we actually have our offices 'cause [NAME] from [NAME] at the end of the last board meeting, came up to me and asked 'you don't do very much in [NAME] do you? (Hugh, Focus Group)

One of the most important things is are we providing what society require, you know are we doing it because just because we want to look good or are we doing it because it's needed there's a hell of a difference there. And I think a good councillor would see the difference...and that's why we always try an' work hand in hand with the councillors and the partners to make sure we're working together towards the goal rather than going off at a tangent saying look what we've done. Although publicity is good (RH: yes) it's not the be all and end all. It's the satisfaction that you know you're helping the people at the end of the day that is what our core values are as far as I, well that's my idea of it. (Gary)

Hugh considers the impact that Corporate Social Responsibility may have on their practice. He explains that the Trust's size and development affects the

ability to question current practices and anticipates reviewing operations when the organization has become more mature. He concedes that 'it is very difficult to see as there are so many different value sets that we are struggling with'; identifying the undecidable place, and feelings of experiencing aporia (Derrida, 1993). We could also relate this to the 'blind spot' that seems to be community engagement, and consider that the complexity although attempted to be captured, would be at the detriment of true engagement. Are some of the deliberations over value sets so intrinsic to practice, that Hugh does not recognise community engagement as one of the double-binds (Derrida, 1999)?

It's hard being very honest about it, to see it making a huge difference to us at the current time. I think if we were larger and more mature then it would be easier to see what the impact might be. For instance I have discussed that we have a very broad remit and we are at an early stage of development so there is a huge amount for us to explore in terms of how our value sets work out in terms of local benefit and environmental benefit. When we get to a more mature stage it's possible that a review process which already takes us towards a focus of corporate social responsibility could help us to correct our direction or correct some failings. Example being the landscape theme, it's developing a business portfolio etc. Were we to review it in two years time we may find in business terms it is being very successful and it's doing this good work and that's all very useful etc. But in doing so it's ignoring such and such area of activity or in doing so it's had x adverse environmental or social impact and the challenge will be looking at blind-spots. The blind-spot could be something like business displacement so in achieving this success, have we displaced other local businesses? And our charity objectives look fine etc but we are having this unanticipated negative effect? And that would be the challenge I think. At our current time it is very difficult to see as there are so many different value sets that we are already struggling with, but when we are more mature it may be more useful to question those value sets. (Hugh)

I can see the point in having it, in the same way as I can see the point in having a business plan. You put things down in a business plan so you can look back and see we did that, or we didn't do that, why didn't we? I can see the sense in having that. I guess what I am a bit cagey about is spending a lot of time on defining the things like corporate social responsibility statements and so forth which might have very little impact. The classic examples would be values, the value statement is there and to some extent used but for all the organising, I spent a day with the whole organization just setting out our value statement. You spend a day talking, you've spent a lot of time and money, you end up with your value statement then you just forget about it as a tool and I'm just a bit hesitant about doing more of those things particularly when we have other things that we're struggling to do. For example if it was to compete with air time for environmental management systems I would say forget about that for

a minute, let's just do the environmental management systems because we know that that fits with our corporate values anyway, it fits with our charitable objectives and it's a must do as a systems review task so we'd do that first. Whereas there might be more mature trusts which have a bit more capacity to actually work on corporate social responsibilities. But that's not to say that you don't make a business plan, and that could be an improvement on the business plan format, and this is a Groundwork UK business plan format, with described sections etc etc. And you could easily say, where's the section on corporate social responsibility, and it would be just a paragraph. And I think that would be useful in terms of review. (Hugh)

This account shows the contradiction involved in the practice of the organization, while setting down codes and systems, the very purpose of the organization remains in the midst of grappling with irreconcilable choices that cannot be reduced. Yet the danger is that these systems and strategies that have been devised to satisfy the communities with which GN engage end up pushing GN towards what may seem a safer place, where the voices are more consistent and clear and coming from those who are influential or already have the ability to be heard.

#### **4.11 Postscript**

The organization's engagement with Corporate Social Responsibility is ongoing, and though this research process began in April 2007 the members of Groundwork are still deliberating and considering what Corporate Social Responsibility means to them. In the focus group setting, there was a robust discussion asking 'is this Corporate Social Responsibility?', 'no that is not Corporate Social Responsibility'; a sign of the negotiations of meaning taking place between the people present. There was indication that participants were unsure of the parameters and were continuing to deliberate about what it means for them as an organization and how to take action. It is this very unboundedness or undecidability that indicates a grappling engagement between this organization and the ethics of which Derrida writes. Intrinsic to ethics is this unbounded dimension, for as soon as we set limits we lose what it is to be ethical.

Alongside this is the idea of 'blind spots' as articulated by Hugh and the effort to balance tensions and dilemmas that are presented by perceived boundaries and differing value sets. Through the focus group discussion there was some

development in the ways through which participants felt Corporate Social Responsibility action could be taken. Most strongly voiced was a volunteer day, but also forging closer links to their own local community. The discussion that unfolded showed development of participants' thoughts since interview and diary keeping though there still seems to be an overlooking of the communities which drives their being. Could Groundwork Northumberland's moral curtain be re-generation which is intrinsic to their whole mission (Davies & Crane, 2003) Do they overlook other issues as long as they're following the broader mission, for example, lack of consultation, prioritising councillors/landowners, only seeking 'community buy-in' to push a project through.

The impact that this research has had on the organization is through providing space and time for participants to consider the complexities of their practice in a one to one interview, self-reflection in the research diaries and together in a focus group setting. The comments below give some indication of this through participants' feedback:

I think it's really valuable because it's made me think about stuff that I don't, you just you kind of come into work, you do your job, go home get cross or go that went really well, get up and do it again. You don't actually get to spend time thinking about what you've been doing. So that's been really useful. (Wendy)

Well thank you because I am still new and so certain things you've raised have got me thinking as well so thank you. (Louis)

'...certain things you've raised have got me thinking'  
(Interview, Amelia)

'...already made [me] think about a couple of things'  
(Laura)

'...it makes you think about things doesn't it, differently?'  
(Emma)

The following exchange is a discussion of a potential focus group, followed by extracts from the focus group in June 2008. This section is included to indicate the ongoing conversations and deliberations that are taking place in the organization, and the action that has been taken since the focus group.

I was thinking that having these interviews with everybody, people seem to reflect about what we've talked about particularly your business



manager, said that the interview had inspired her to think about things that she needed to ... action... bring a different perspective. And I would be interested towards the end when most people have had an interview maybe to pull some people together to have a focus group on where maybe to move forward to it. It wouldn't be a great deal of time but maybe that would be an opportunity to discuss as a group how to move forward. (RH)

Yes I think what would be useful about it for me would be would be that thing about blind-spots- there are some things we have been focussed on and some things we had forgotten about altogether and you could provide a little bit of a catalyst to bring some of those out. (Hugh)

#### **4.11.1 Focus Group Extracts**

Gary: There are issues of time and money, we want to contribute.

Emma: How about putting up the rent (for union depot)?

Amelia: More income would mean more money and time.

Amelia: Well if it was corporate social responsibility that's over and above your normal job role isn't it, so surely for that you could go outside, could you not?

Hugh: I don't know

Gary: We're looking after the building from that point of view because we keep the rents and service charges so light on the rest of the building, with all the sub-tenants, they can then have their process cheap which in turn helps the local community. So instead of paying seven or eight pounds sort of for a roast and all the trimming, they're paying three pound ninety five, four pound, which means that it's good for local business and for a lot of people.

Emma: It's no good for our business. It's not good for our business because we're subsidising them, why should we subsidise them, we shouldn't.

Amelia: Maybe we should subsidise their gardening not their meals.

Hugh: Well there's a balance to be struck between subsidising the local businesses which strictly speaking is not the game we're in, operating at cost, which is what we should be doing, what we aim to do. But the other thing you wonder about well I wonder about there is that our presence in Pegswood doesn't really count for very much in terms of our planning. We don't sort of plan for Pegswood and we perhaps could do more. I'm thinking of things like the Pegswood community centre you know we don't particularly fall foot into Pegswood Community Centre, it would be an easy enough thing to do, compared to spending a lot of time trying to

forge links with Greater Morpeth Development trust, Amble development trust, which are also local level organizations.

The above extracts indicate that the members of GN are continuing to negotiate meanings of Corporate Social Responsibility through interactions. These exchanges may be read as the possibilities of action, as interactions encourage questioning and unsettling of individual's positions, as they face the unknown.

Action has taken place following the focus group that took place in June 2008, the GN group went on a volunteering/team building day in September 2008. Seven employees visited a local community wood in order to trim branches from trees that were providing cover for youths at night times and were deterring locals from walking along the stretch of park in the evenings. Alcohol bottles and syringes were found and the branches were cut down making the park a safer walking route for locals. The branches were then used to build shelters in a team building afternoon. Gary recounted the experience to me, over the phone, stating that he enjoyed the experience and that the afternoon in particular was effective in teambuilding. He described how at the beginning of the team building they were given a task to put up a tent and that 'chaos' descended as people talked over each other, and were not able to complete the task. The team was then divided into two, each given the task of building a shelter, Gary described his own team's shelter as sturdy and strong and the other team's as quite useless in the weather. When the shelters were built each team took the other team's shelter down. It was apparent that Gary took great delight in watching the other team take a full twenty minutes to take his team's shelter down while they took five minutes to take the other team's down.

Although the focus group was the last formal engagement with the research organization, I have been asked to consider continuing my involvement with Groundwork Northumberland, and therefore this is not the end of the journey for the research organization's engagement with Corporate Social Responsibility. While the organizational members are continuing to translate what Corporate Social Responsibility means to them.

## **Chapter Five      Conclusion**

In this chapter, the aims of the thesis will be revisited, in particular the questions that framed the project; What meaning may Corporate Social Responsibility have within a third sector setting? How can a third sector organization engage in exploring what Corporate Social Responsibility means to them? Could Corporate Social Responsibility have a place in the organization, and the wider context of the third sector? What insights can culture provide when considering the responsibilities of a third sector organisation? The original contribution of this work and future research will then be addressed.

This account attempts a portrayal of the complexities, contradictions and conflicts in the practice of a third sector organization, which are represented through the tensions and dilemmas discussed. This portrayal offers an account that, rather than being ordered and formally presented, instead, in keeping with the complexity of the subject, I have chosen to present an auto-ethnographic account (page 30). I am aware that for the research participants this account may be uncomfortable and one that may not be wholly recognisable to all participants, which suggests the necessity and importance of opening this to readers, and the uncomfortable place in which we may find ourselves when we truly engage ethically.

Reflecting its symbolic interactions commitments, a case study approach has been used in researching this unique context. All eight members of the organization have participated by variously engaging in: semi-structured interviews (with me), keeping a research diary (individually) and participating in a focus group (with colleagues). These engagements have generated multiple accounts which demonstrate the tensions and dilemmas that mark their work, particularly in meeting expectations of stakeholders. Through these engagements the self-understanding of participants has been shown to be challenged and changed through the research process. The 'concept' of Corporate Social Responsibility has proved to be similarly inconstant. All understandings are however, intelligible only in a context of practice in which at least some self-understanding is shared.

## Meanings

The research accounts of participants show how the term 'Corporate Social Responsibility' has been debated, negotiated, questioned and considered through the research stages. For most employees Corporate Social Responsibility is considered intrinsic to their practice through the social purpose that underpins their work. When responsibility was discussed, their definitions of being responsible were expressed through words that signified openness, living and breathing, and continual questioning of how to be responsible.

One is only responsible when one is not sure if one has been responsible. If we have the certainty that we are in The Good, then it has slipped away.  
(Jones, 2007:526)

It has been proposed by two participants that Groundwork Northumberland's responsibility is to help others deliver their responsibilities (page 126); by creating partnerships with corporate organizations; suggesting that responsibility defines them and is different to CSR, which is more of a private sector conception. It is here then the distinction is made by some participants between the responsibilities of a third sector organization and how responsibility is practised in a private sector setting (page 124). *Corporate* social responsibility is contemplated as a closed, public relations interested strategy for most corporations. There were some positive examples given also, but overall there is a cynicism of how responsibility is embodied in the private sector in contrast to what is claimed and portrayed by, as well as seen of the corporation.

The term then is questioned within their work, whilst simultaneously the expansion of their organisation and affiliation with Groundwork UK suggests a possible corporatisation of their organisation and connects to a wider 'professionalisation' of the third sector (Seitanidi, 2005:67). Due to Corporate Social Responsibility being considered a private sector term, participants are led to question what application Corporate Social Responsibility has to their own frame of reference. Through doing so, there was a visible questioning of their responsibilities. Challenging the rigid conventions which restrict the

relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility to the private sector demonstrates both the contest and construction of meaning and frame of reference of Corporate Social Responsibility by employees in Groundwork Northumberland, and also the negotiation of meanings between them as the comprehension and practice of Corporate Social Responsibility are developed (for example, focus group discussions on page 184).

Several interviewees identified that Corporate Social Responsibility could hold some meaning in their practice. The notion that Corporate Social Responsibility represents doing 'something' over and above what is required in their jobs was voiced by several GN employees, and seems to have arisen following Beta Plus training (see page 125). This has been actioned through a volunteering day that has been arranged since the research stages were completed. Alongside the idea of contributing over and above their jobs, when contemplated in the context of their practice, it is implied that a rather different application may be useful, one which considers 'blind spots'. Blind-spots are defined as areas that have been overlooked in their practice and that need to be engaged with, raised or considered. The Executive Director is particularly interested in this application, raising this meaning repeatedly throughout his interview and in diary inserts. He offers numerous examples, of possible blind spots, one such example focuses on renewable energy (see pages 127-8), the scenario emphasises the need to consider further than the remit of a project, to the organisational purpose.

Another possible application offers a glimpse of the aporia of choosing how to proceed when there are competing value sets to be responded to (see page 161). This becomes particularly meaningful when considered alongside the tensions and dilemmas that mark the practice of GN employees, especially when attempting to address the needs of different stakeholders. Indicating that Corporate Social Responsibility is 'of interest for every single organization' (Kakabadse & Rozuel, 2006:79) and is not bound in the private sector.

### **Boundaries**

Boundaries are considered as an engagement with deconstruction, as directed by Jones (2007) These boundaries that are evident in Groundwork

Northumberland's practice are those of geography, work roles, work teams, work remit and territory. Some of these boundaries create dilemmas and tensions. The sector in which they function offers conflict, ambiguity, tensions and dilemmas because the complexity of practice, although considered to be settled, is in fact full of contradiction. The boundaries that are apparent in Groundwork Northumberland's work environment could be considered an attempt to order the complexity inherent in their work. Yet, it is apparent that these boundaries are artificial, evidenced by participants being 'torn', the tensions, the dilemmas, the balancing which is being attempted and the blindness which we may consider present. As with order comes disorder, with balance comes imbalance, and these tensions and dilemmas symbolise these pressures so Groundwork Northumberland grapples with balancing value sets, that are impossible to measure, but yet are an intrinsic part of the purpose of their organization. It is through the consideration of these dilemmas and tensions that we engage with Derrida's writings on responsibility. The words used to describe the practice of GN indicate engagement with true responsibilities that are encountered, struggled with, and experienced. This project did not set out to connect with Derrida's writings on ethics, but found these links inductively. Within these accounts are empirical research that support Derrida's 'undecidability' and contribute to connecting Derrida's writing on ethics with corporate social responsibility, as Jones (2003:225) has noted '(surprisingly) little attention has been paid to connecting Derrida's works on ethics with questions of organization and with specific issues such as business ethics and corporate social responsibility'.

### **Stakeholders**

Groundwork Northumberland's purpose is to 'make a difference' and to impact on communities, yet, the influencers in projects are most often the political stakeholders, and the 'other' is considered to be funders, landowners, councillors and partners, by most participants. Some participants hold the 'other' to be those who have the least power, i.e. local communities. Yet more people discuss engaging with the 'other' as a means of 'pushing planning applications through' (pages 156,175); as a reciprocal exchange rather than a true response.

In a stakeholder approach, stakeholders are engaged with in order to foster a good reputation and achieve goals. Political stakeholders decide which projects can take place, regardless of community preference, due to their powerful interwoven roles as funders, delivery partners and maintainers of the finished project. The community, the very purpose of Groundwork Northumberland's work, seems to be overlooked, or engaged with as a means of seeking planning permission for a project, rather than being connected with. Public relations were discussed in the focus group, to determine why publicity is necessary. The motivation seems to be to show trustees that they are being good citizens in their local area, and perhaps helping others to help themselves. We may consider that generating publicity as a means of acquiring additional funding enables more communities to be helped.

Has the community become the 'other', an unrecognisable, disconnected entity? It is evident that Groundwork Northumberland have engagement mechanisms in place, and yet there is an awareness by two participants that the 'same old people' (page 172) are engaged with, rather than those who are more reluctant to speak. It is this silent group of people whose presence stands in the shadows of interviewee's words on engagement. When this issue was discussed in the focus group one participant declared that consultation was not an issue anymore, while another remarked that it was an ongoing issue but one that is more about the smooth running of the business.

On my last visit to the organization there was documentation pinned to the walls of the corridor which on closer inspection gave details of community compacts, a 'toolkit' passed on by Groundwork UK. Can the complexities of interaction with the 'other' be formulated into a strategy? The community compacts may provide different points of contact, for example, receiving feedback after a project is completed. However, this strategy seems to be moving towards a 'customer satisfaction' focus, rather than engaging with those whose purpose they are there to serve. It almost seems that having a compact which minimises negative publicity motivates, rather than really connecting with a silent group.

Alongside these thoughts on the local community, consideration needs to be given to the difficulties encountered, as for example, when asking community

members for their thoughts on what they would like to be done with funding for their play area there are 'conflicting' responses which cannot be reconciled (for example page 167). These conflicts that cannot be reconciled and pull participants in different directions could be seen as the uncomfortable experience of undecidability (Derrida, 1993) and yet it is this grappling and pulling that affects employees of GN deeply. It is not surprising that protocols have been designed in order to attempt to reduce some of this grappling, yet, the consequences of this grappling which one could consider to be a lack of response are real and considered and marked by ethical purpose.

### **Tensions and Dilemmas**

The tensions and dilemmas running throughout this work indicate that it is not possible to place boundaries around the complexities of projects, and therefore conflict, contradiction and ambiguity are omnipresent. This complexity unsettles project workers as they are placed in a position of undecidability. This is an uncomfortable place, and yet suffering this discomfort is necessary to making responsible choices and decisions. The products of this discomfort could be the compacts and protocols that are being created. One participant strongly advocates more resources 'on the ground' (page 171); to talk to people in the local community, not only at meetings, which the 'usual suspects' will attend, and not just a faceless written response to a letter posted through their door or an advert in the local newspaper. A real response, an exchange, that may be discomfiting but is real, connected and engaged. It is this undecidability, this lack of answers, that is uncomfortable, and yet is the meeting place with this 'other' who is absent from these accounts. A trace of this is present in these accounts because what is not said is evidenced by what is said. These accounts are fragmented and not held together in a fixed state, they are deconstructing the assumptions of those who speak and presenting those who don't. I have not bound these accounts, but instead presented them verbatim to give the opportunity for the reader to engage and interpret from their own position.

Groundwork Northumberland's engagement with Corporate Social Responsibility is ongoing as are the deliberations, tensions and dilemmas that mark their practice. We conclude with Wendy's words which offer a sense of



the continuing difficulties for the meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility in the third sector context and alongside that the possibilities for it:

I think it's a real issue and it's something that I think the third sector is really grappling with at the moment. And I don't necessarily think there's an answer to it. I don't think there's going to be a tailored fit that this is the model all the third sector's going to use. I think that it's going to be much more meeting local needs on the ground and how that pans out. So on the one hand you want the third sector to become more competitive and much more savvy but then on the other hand you want the added value of them. You want them to talk to people and know their clients really well and their customers and how do you bring those in, the only way you do it is with a huge amount of resource. *And that's the whole problem you don't have it*, a very difficult place I think. (Wendy)

It seems that the greatest aporia of all, is the pull between resources and community engagement, as decisions need to be made efficiently in order to fulfil projects and organisational purpose. I consider this to be similar to the Executive Director's dilemma between spending funds on green energy or having more resources on the ground (page 161), in which the choice was made to sustain resources on the ground, in Chapter Four I considered what this meant. Although it would seem to be preserving practice, the choice not to buy green energy may be more detrimental, as it is the small deliberations that participants have described as keeping responsibility living and breathing. In a similar vein it could be considered that protocols are undermining a real response to the local communities, seen in a different light it could be argued that the resources that are spared by reducing the time spent on engagement equate to serving more communities. It is this place that GN finds itself at, an uncomfortable pull between two irreducible, irreconcilable demands, which suggests a true engagement with responsibility.

## **Culture**

Martin's framework has been considered as a means to represent the culture of the organisation. Participants accounts' were divided into the three perspectives of culture, identified by Martin; integration, differentiation and fragmentation. These perspectives were useful in identifying shared and different viewpoints, the integration perspective offers a depiction of order and harmony which we may question. The differentiation perspective may be identified by the existence of sub-cultures, there seems to be distinct work team

cultures and hierarchical cultures. Acknowledgements of the inconsistencies in and between sub-cultures, introduces complexity to this perspective of GN's culture. The ambiguity of the culture in GN is more apparent in the quotes included in this perspective. There is a general lack of consensus, with no definitive consistencies or inconsistencies, placing ambiguity at the centre of culture. The third perspective highlighting ambiguity, paradox and contradiction seems to best represent the accounts of the research engagement with GN. This is evidenced by ambiguity and contradictory perspectives in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility. The empirical research highlights this perspective as providing the conditions that illuminate the possibility of engaging with true ethics within the participants' practice, as implicitly acknowledged by Hugh when noting the tensions that are felt by the group, and supporting both the writings of Derrida and Jones. The presence of tension and difference as well as a sense of disorder suggest a place for debate, discussion and plurivocality, a place in which there is indecision and the possibility of decision, 'indeed the aporia makes action possible' (Jones, 2003:229).

Martin's dichotomy of perspectives simplified the accounts of the participants. It is only in the third perspective, that the ambiguity that Derrida argues is crucial to ethical decision could be seen.

## **5.1 Original Contribution**

These accounts exhibit the radical undecidability of Derrida's ethical situation in all its lived messiness. The culture of an organization which has engaged in such meaning construction is shown to be marked by the acknowledgment of the responsibility of meaning-making and is aporetic. The contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate the responsibilities inherent in an engagement by the precariousness of meaning exhibited by Corporate Social Responsibility in an organization which has chosen such engagement.

Alongside the empirical research that connects the practice of this third sector organisation with Derrida's writings on undecidability, aporias and double binds, is implicit critique of Martin's three perspective framework. The accounts of participants were divided up into the three different perspectives that Martin advocates, it was found that only the third perspective would account for the

ambiguity, tensions and dilemmas that were present in practice. It can therefore be suggested that a responsible organization and person will be more marked by fragmentation than integration or differentiation, and that fragmentation provides conditions which Derrida discusses through the terms 'aporia' and 'undecidability'. Hence, only the ambiguous perspective can be considered to be a culture in which ethical decisions are made. It could also be concluded that in order to examine responsibilities of an organisation, it is necessary to understand the culture, and hence practice of the organisation.

## **5.2 Future Research**

This project suggests that Corporate Social Responsibility holds meaning in a third sector organization through deliberating and questioning practice that may then encourage identification of 'blind spots' and consideration of balancing competing value sets. It would be of interest for these suggested meanings to be considered in the practice of another third sector organisation, and in a corporate setting to consider the application of Derrida's undecidability in the private sector.

The voices of the local communities would enrich this account, and so future research may attempt to engage with members of the community whose voices are not included.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Groundwork Northumberland Research Report
- Appendix 2 Interview Questions

## Appendix One

## Appendix Two

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