

Andrew Raven Trust Annual Weekend
Ardtornish 15th – 17th June 2012
Shared Space

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Précis

Arriving in damp and misty weather, this year's guests at the annual Andrew Raven Trust (ART) gathering at Ardtornish might have gleaned an early lesson on the weekend's theme of Shared Space, had we managed to pause long enough between car and house to consider what was being taught. But most of us probably missed it as we scurried frantically through one of the densest welcoming parties of midges ever encountered. Patiently, Mother Nature provided a reminder the next morning in the form of a red deer parading in Ardtornish's lovely (and well-fenced) garden. At our peril do we forget all those others with whom we share our space in this life, and how they may view resources we think of as our own.

The weekend was an investigation of what it means to share space, with each other and other species, in the context of where we live, the worlds we work in, and the less tangible spaces of our economic and political spheres. The background is the ART's interest in building a series of conversations and connections on themes relating to sustainable rural development. This was the sixth annual weekend of the series, and followed the now accustomed pattern of mixing indoor presentations and discussions with outdoor wanderings and wonderings. The themes of the weekends have been very different, and the participants are drawn from a wide slice of life – one is thrown in and thrown together (let it be said, in the kindly and hospitable style of Ardtornish and the Ravens), to a programme whose exoticness challenges all comers, with other trepid souls from seemingly foreign backgrounds. Perhaps that makes it obvious why language and how we communicate is a recurrent topic.

What is more surprising (and heartening) is how the discussions often seem to distil down to the same few words – community and place, collaboration, knowledge and creativity, ecology, economy, energy and connectedness. Maybe this is a simple reminder that we're not such a sophisticated lot as we sometimes think. And in our conflicted world, perhaps we have more in common and less to fight about than it seems. The quiet magic of these Ardtornish weekends is that they confirm how good it is to come together and reiterate our kinship, and how easily and well we can do that.

This year's programme was a demonstration of some very different ways of bringing people together to share experiences and perspectives which might otherwise be in conflict: Katrina Brown's participatory video about land use and recreation in the Cairngorms; Sera Irvine and Ruth Little's collision of artists and scientists in each other's spaces or on a boat; Simon Murray's explication of devised theatre as a way of "finding the tools for conviviality"; Bill Sutherland's ponderings on our engagement with the environment and each other; Bill Thompson and Katie Thornburrow's discussion of whether digital technology can help to do this; and Deirdre Nelson and Mary Jane Lamond's application of the ancient principles of knitting and singing to the same ends. All of these seemed to share the same virtue – the creation of an equitably shared space which allows expression of the experiences and voices of all concerned and does not presume on the outcome.

The effect of this is that, coming to understand the perspectives of others, each participant also sees how well, or badly, their own perspective fits with the collective whole.

Of course, the challenges and conflicts of an ever more crowded world were as much a part of the weekend's discussions. Conflict arises where views are marginalised or excluded – food production which forgets that the environment is its entire basis is doomed, deer management which prioritises the luxury of a few over the needs of many doesn't work, nor does dumping the true costs of new technology onto voiceless others. But Ardtornish's relationship with Morvern is positive and creative, the islanders of Eigg are in pretty full possession of their fate, scientists will write poems and people all over the world knit Arctic terns, given the invitation. So if one of the lessons was about how much we have in common, another was that, in conflict, it's how we define and demarcate the space for dialogue that counts – who gets to speak? who wasn't invited? Is the space fairly shared or is there a prejudicial hierarchy at work?

In closing the weekend's discussions, Mandy Raven talked about keeping faith in our own capacities, but having the humility to recognise our limits - when all else fails, we can dig the garden. But ought we not sometimes to be a bit more assertive too? Our biggest problems come from the space we share with distant or intangible forces – structures of power and governance which marginalise us and (Bill Clinton nearly got it right) the stupid economy. It is natural to fight for resources, assert rights – deer do it in our woods and gardens, midges in the air. The idea of “beating the bounds” was another recurrent thread in the weekend - the ancient custom of walking our rightful territory to know its extent, and to make sure our neighbours know it too! So maybe we should do more of that, beat out our boundaries, enter into (in Simon Murray's words) “the camaraderie of rogues and revolutionaries”, and reclaim some lost ground in how our world is run.

Friday evening

Angus Robertson (Estate Manager and Trustee of ART) gave an introduction to the Ardtornish Estate, whose management is now multi-faceted and self-financing (for more, see the [Ardtornish website](#) and [reports from previous weekends](#)). In the context of shared space, like much of the Highlands, the populations of Ardtornish and Morvern were cleared first for sheep then for deer. Morvern's population is now about 300 people compared to 2000 in 1800. The Estate provides 35½ jobs, directly and indirectly, and is intimately involved with the community, with some continuity - the youngest employee represents the fourth generation of his family to work at Ardtornish. Indeed, sharing space equitably with the local community (as well as the Raven family, visitors and the wider world) is an explicit part of Ardtornish's statement of purpose.

The Estate built its first hydro-scheme in 1996, a 600KW scheme which produces enough power for the whole of Morvern. A second one, which is a cascade scheme storing and using the water more than once, has been built with great sensitivity for the landscape – the power house is stone clad and a crannog on the loch is protected by limiting maximum water level. As we saw on our post-breakfast airing on Saturday, this is now all ready to go – frustrated only by the lamentable lack of rain this spring. The Estate's full hydro potential might be as much as 8-10MW (and Ardtornish is not unusual in the west Highlands). There could be wind-power too, but a windfarm raises hackles in the community. (Comment from Eigg, which has wind, hydro and solar power, all off-grid and all scaled for local use and preference – since the first Ardtornish hydro scheme could cover all local

needs, it's perhaps not surprising that talk of more (and more) brings out the NIMBY attitude). But the community is interested in developing its own renewables capacity, potentially in partnership with Forestry Commission, which has grants available in its community fund.

Sharing space across difference – using video to gain perspective. Katrina Brown

The physical space for outdoor access (eg the Cairngorms National Park) and the relative rights of those sharing it has been highly contested in Scotland. To deal with this, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code has multi-use, not zoning, at its heart, with an emphasis on the principles and norms that enable sharing, between land use and recreation, between different types of recreation, and between humans and other species. Katrina Brown and colleagues at the James Hutton Institute have been using miniature video technology like “headcams” (on humans and even dogs) to get new perspectives on sharing physical space in the Cairngorms National Park (exercising and managing the rights of outdoor access) and on sharing intimate spaces of human experience (trying to understand and empathise with the perspectives of others).

The unique trick of this technique is that whilst in a sense it captures the ordinary experiences of walkers or mountain bikers (the physicality, rhythm, sights, sounds and interactions with other people/animals), reviewing it evokes a different understanding. In short, it makes the familiar strange, which lets us think of and ask new questions about our use of the outdoor space. This work brought insights on the craft of choreography – the trade-offs and norms which develop between walkers and mountain bikers for instance, and on the uncertain terrain of moral geography – where and when walkers let their dogs loose. A short video about dog walking in the Cairngorms, with Park staff, RSPB, farmers, walkers and dogs (with dogcams) was very illuminating about how the activities and behaviours of participants may or may not be acceptable to others – for example the delicate habit of “stick and flick” for easy relocation of dog-poo.

(Which led to a consideration of normative behaviour. For example, almost all of us wear our seat belts. Smokers now know that they need to exit enclosed spaces before lighting up. Dog walkers in public parks and streets have been persuaded that it is good to collect little warm parcels in plastic bags. But what about out in the semi-wild of a Cairngorms path – is stick-and-flick really a civilised response or is it simply to deflect the problem somewhere slightly further from one's immediate consciousness?)

Dinner and informal discussions followed, a few smokers attempted to delineate some space unshared with midges, and so to bed.

Saturday morning

Returning from a brisk outing up to the new hydro dam, **Angus Hardie** (ART Trustee) opened the day's discussions by reflecting that shared space is a good definition of what a community is. It implies shared good, mutuality, generosity and working together. This is counter to today's culture of individual atomised lives, but now that the architecture which supports self interest is getting a bit shaky, might the intrinsic value of shared space be on the rise?

Inventing the conditions of invention: sharing social space and devised theatre. Simon Murray

Simon Murray is Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies at Glasgow University, and works in devised theatre, which he describes as a collective exercise without any route maps - a cultural, social and political practice. As such, it offers a set of conditions which propose something creative and inventive to the world outside the theatre rehearsal studio. With its origins in the 1960s, it speaks of our desire to articulate concerns with form and process, not just end products, of the need to

embrace collective solutions, and to challenge authority and convention. Makers and spectators are jointly invited through the process to explore or attend to a shared space. In making theatre, as much as in any activity of social collaboration, we need to explore the dynamics of space - what does it offer, encourage, enable, constrain or prevent?

Devised theatre is about finding the tools for conviviality and the generative power of play and playing. It investigates the practices and paradigms of shared ownership and collective authorship, and challenges the exclusivity – but not the existence - of expertise. It is also about the politics of acknowledgment and friendship, and is a way of considering how to construct and enable an environment which allows its participants to flourish.

Echoing the experience of many who have observed the extraordinary collective wealth of knowledge and skills which communities represent (and see the report of the [Vital Communities](#) weekend, on growing carrots in Birse), he quoted Simon McBurney, director and founder of “Theatre de Complicité”: “I do not prepare people so they know about where they are going. I prepare them so they are ready; ready to change, ready to be surprised; ready to seize any opportunity that comes their way”.

He suggested a trilogy of linked qualities which help us to produce work, or make art:

- *Play and playfulness* – as a state (Tim Etchells writes) in which meaning is in flux, in which possibility thrives, in which versions multiply, in which the confines of what is real are blurred, buckled, broken. ... Play is an attempt to shift the boundaries of real time and real space ... a statement of “I can change the paradigm we are working in”.
- *Disponibilité* - nearest English equivalent might be openness – described by Jaques Lecoq as “a perpetual state of discovery, of openness, of freedom to receive”.
- *Complicité* - again no direct translation but perhaps best summed up by Michael Ratcliffe as a “form of collusion between celebrants”. So something darker and more suspicious than “working together”, implying a shared space perhaps where rules and laws are transgressed, boundaries are tested and extended in a spirit of shared, gleeful pleasure: more the camaraderie of rogues and revolutionaries than the quiet self-satisfied handholding of saints.
- To which he added a fourth – that of *lightness* - not to be confused with triviality or frivolity but (as Italo Calvino had it) a tactic for dealing with the weight of things, a strategy intended “to prevent the weight of matter from crushing us”.

So – perhaps a route map after all? To devise a better way of living, let us be playful, open to receiving the world as it is, let us collude and be roguish as we will, and light enough not to let our difficulties grind us down.

Maggie Gill

Introducing a session on the role of science in evolving sustainable rural communities, Maggie reflected on how our education system had for so long streamed the “artists” from the “scientists”, and how difficult it was to ask questions of people from disciplines different than one’s own. Yet ecology is about understanding the communities that exist between very different things in a shared space.

Art and science – a reflection. Sera Irvine

In preparation for a conference last year on approaches to conflicts in conservation, the Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (ACES) invited 5 artists (a writer, a sculptor, a jazz pianist and 2 environmental artists) to participate in a joint process working and talking with scientists. This “space sharing” took place in 3 stages: first out in the field, where artists listened and asked about what the scientists were doing, second in neutral locations where neither group had any connection, which allowed time for all participants to see new things without any responsibility or expectation, and third in Clashnettie arts centre where the academics learned about the artists’ approach to problem-solving.

Sites visited included Langholm Moor, where stakeholders have been working together to find balance between the interests of grouse shooting, harriers, meadow pipits and the landscape (the artists saw this scenario like a play); and two neighbouring estates, one trying to cultivate trees by regeneration, the other, deer for sport. Discussions were around the nature of conflicting interests, the objectives and attitudes of different stakeholders, that there might well be no rights or wrongs and how often the contributing factors have nothing to do with economics.

Needless to say, communication was a recurrent theme, and changed depending on the environment that it happened in. Meeting together over food was the most productive time, when the talk moved furthest and deepest (echoes from discussions about the value of community eating at the 3rd ART weekend). The strength of the project lay not only in the artefacts, writing and music produced but also in the legacy of the process. Having the creative practitioners working with the academics in different locations provided an opportunity for clarifying thought processes through talking and for the artists, the opportunity to process the understanding of what they had learned through making. In terms of communicating science to a wider audience, the project was also a reminder of David Hume’s belief that we react with our emotions before our intellect is engaged.

Sharing space and land use – Bill Sutherland

“A sad nerdy scientist” (his words) who wrote a book full of equations with only one joke in it, Bill Sutherland is keen on pushing science but sees it as only part of the argument. This presentation about our attitudes to landscapes, and how they shape us and us them, was accompanied by a rare public viewing of his own artwork, which he described with mis-placed modesty as “best viewed from a distance”.

David Hockney’s recent pictures of wilderness areas in the States and rather grottier views of Forestry Commission plantations in the UK illustrate strikingly how attitudes to landscape differ between the UK and the US. The landscape we care about in the UK is really a farmed one – hand axes dating back ½ million years prove why – ours is a long-modified landscape which would be broadly recognisable today to a Roman general. In the US the natives had little impact, changes have been more recent, and restoration projects can know from photographs what the pristine landscape looked like. Franz Vera (Dutch ecologist) said that everywhere was once forest but pollen records show that this country has always had open areas, grazed by deer, aurochs, previously mammoths, which would explain the response of trees such as hazel to regrow from coppice.

Where do our notions of beauty in a landscape come from? Since we have all evolved out of East Africa, it seems natural that our general preference is for a savannah landscape - grassland dotted with trees and lakes. Indeed, is this not what we reconstruct in our classic designed landscapes? (Artful re-rendition at this point of Angus Robertson's Ardtornish hydro view, with distant acacia and giraffe, zebra on island in foreground loch. Next picture, same view but acacia and giraffe replaced by windmills, zebra mutates to red deer stag. What's more beautiful to us in energy-anxious Scotland today – a few more or less trees, a few more or less windmills?).

What is the landscape-scale view for? Tiny things like marsh fritillaries need whole landscapes to move about in; new bee orchids don't grow where bee orchids grow - to protect them we have to protect areas where none are growing. And what are we to do about producing food, which we can expect to need twice as much of in the next 30 years – intensify everywhere? some places? elsewhere? Will multiple use be the answer? The same concerns apply to the marine environment.

In conclusion (view out of Bill's bedroom window) we spend too much time looking out/through. We need more ways of being out (and see the National Trust's [50 things to do before you're 11¼](#)), more ways of engaging people with the environment, more ways of bringing people together to work out how to conserve our world.

Discussion

Marriage of an artist to a scientist (Sera and Justin) must make for a good balanced household. Combination of the 2 in one person (Bill) was another thing! What changed for the scientists involved in the ACES project? It was more obvious how the artists changed, but the scientists wrote some interesting poems.

Can scientific data and analysis help to reconcile the issues of conflicting land use or are the problems too fundamental? Science can help solve conflicts, or cause them! But it's getting people to swap perspectives that helps (eg that farming is not simply about food production). And understanding that people do have vested interests (eg gamekeeper in grouse). On the Scottish government's work in developing a land use strategy, you can get a broad understanding on a small scale, but it's much harder at a large (national) scale. (Better done locally then?)

On the image through the window – so much of the human population is now living in vast metropolitan areas, nature deficit disorder causes stress and psychological disorders (see National Trust's "[Natural Childhood](#)" report). What we see when we open the curtains determines everything. If we were to acknowledge the science here, views of open landscape might be part of the NHS budget. When the new Morvern primary school was being built nursery children had to move out into the woods, and gained lots of confidence – now not sure about the need to move back. But beware of positing urban and rural areas as opposites. Small (urban) green areas are stunning and merit care and attention. There are less physical spaces in towns so there is often more conflict over them, but they are where people come together. Eye contact may be made on paths or in parks, but is less likely in a street. Shaping green spaces builds community power.

Sharing implies a benign condition, something desirable, but the existing state of much of what we share is hierarchical.

Land needs to provide multiple benefits. Is there a correlation between increasing diversity of benefits and decreasing conflict amongst users? Or is the question about hierarchy and how benefits are spread? – democratic Eigg could have a wind farm if the community chose to. In fjord Norway, communities are very closely connected with the natural environment because of how their political system is organised. They have a strong sense of ownership, and awareness of the physical extent of their resources (annual events to walk the bounds). Lots of urban Norwegians have huts. We could spend half the NHS budget on summer houses.

Saturday afternoon outing

Out and about in the afternoon with Lilia Dobrokhodova, Development Officer for Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC), we first visited **the new allotments at Lochaline**. About 8 or 9 local families, plus others, have allotments here. The area is enclosed by a deer fence, and there's a polytunnel, a grand shed full of useful equipment and a log cabin being built by community effort. The soil is very stony, though not poor quality. Some topsoil has been brought in, but some of the gardeners have made do, and made artful (and doubtless back-breaking) use of their quota of stones! Getting the land was the first step, and finding out who owned it (Highland Council or Ardtornish) was a bit of a puzzle. Coordinating the £52.5K of funding for the project required the formation of (yet another) local voluntary organisation - CLAM (Community Land Association Morvern), further evidence of the energy there is in even the smallest communities when opportunity and frustration collide (deer have presumably hitherto inhibited vegetable growing in Lochaline).

Next, along the shore to **the sand mine**. The sand mine was opened in 1941 by the War Department and contracted to a local slate quarrying company to provide high grade sand for making optical instrument dials and lenses. The mine closed about five years ago, which was a blow to the local economy. In response to this, MCDC looked at trying to re-open the mine as a community business but decided this was too big, complicated and risky to be feasible. So the community has welcomed the recent re-opening of the mine by a new company, to supply glass to Pilkington for making photovoltaic cells. This represents a great boost to the local economy, as 10-15% of the Morvern workforce is employed by the mine. The land is owned by the Forestry Commission and by Ardtornish Estate, both of whom gain income from rent and royalties on the sand excavated.

Ironically, in the interim, the closure of the mine had had a hidden benefit for the community, as it led to Morvern becoming a focus area for support by the government's development agency, Highlands and Islands Enterprise. HIE funded a development officer for MCDC. With this resource the community company has grown in confidence. Recent activities have included sourcing and organising the use of further funding, allowing the community to build pontoon yacht berths and community allotments and also to start looking at community renewable energy investment.

Right beside the sandmine is the community's **new marina** (opened June 2011) – a set of lightweight floating pontoons to berth up to 20 yachts, boosting the local economy through tourism as well as providing a facility for local dive boat operators. The construction of this is admirably low impact and pleasingly low-tech – something which one feels positively adds to the landscape. The project is now to be extended by provision of purpose built shore facilities (toilets, showers, a chandlery) for

marine visitors. And virtue of virtues – surplus from the sandmine is to be used to make a modest new beach.

Our route back to Ardtornish was along the old shore road through the **lochside woodlands** (owned by Ardtornish). Probably ancient woodland with only native species originally, a couple of centuries of meddling mean that a number of other species are now quite at home here – Scots pine, larch and sycamore which is thriving. The economics of modern forestry being as they are (heavily predicated on centralised principles and the ability to conduct operations in intensive sporadic bursts) these woods have been left out of the estate’s management regime and are now over-mature. They are also a space valued by deer.

But sustainable development would say they should be used. With Ardtornish, Jake Willis of *Soundwood* is now proposing to return them to a more Victorian pattern of management (small scale and continuous), commercialising them for primarily local trade. Half the volume of timber which can come out of the woods now (to create space for regeneration of younger trees) will provide fuel. But there are specialities too – larch for external construction, ripple sycamore for fiddle backs. The next stage will be to get the young trees up and away, and plant some others – Douglas fir and cedar make durable timber.

As is not unusual at outdoor meetings in Scotland, there ensued a discussion about deer (“the herbivore in the room”). Deer are a common resource in both senses of the word. There are lots of them and nobody owns them, though land owners own the right to “take them”. But what if they don’t, or don’t take enough of them to suit their neighbours’ interests, or positively encourage them (winter feeding) to boost hunting income and capital value of their estates? Deer Management Groups (for “stakeholders”, but excluding the wider community) have been set up across Scotland to work in this rather desolate space. It’s said that they are considered to be successful if members are still speaking to each other at the end of a meeting. In the altogether friendlier environment at Ardtornish it is proposed to create small deer-free areas within the wood, as per local tradition where most native woodlands were walled.

All in all one’s impressions of Morvern and Lochaline are of a community working inspiredly in the cusp between what it needs, what it has, and what it wants to be.

Saturday evening

Sea change. Ruth Little

Boats, islands and sea-passages are all real phenomenon, and metaphors. Like fractals, they teach us that we are not alone. It is our notion of boundaries that stops us from expressing our “contingency” – that we exist in the context of others.

Cape Farewell was set up as an experiment in reorientation. It began as an expeditionary sailing organisation, getting artists and scientists together on a boat in the High Arctic to explore alternative forms of communicating the science of climate change. The current project under this banner is [Sea Change](#), journeying across the Scottish islands, because island communities and ecologies, just like boats, offer evidence of the reality of resource constraint; the relationship between needs and limits that is in the end the stuff of climate change. And there’s nothing like being at sea to take away the

illusion of control (colourful photo of chaotic heap of footwear in the boat's "boot room", in which no one could find their own).

This journey has taught about the value of slow travel, of the diversity of forms of knowledge, the craft of cooperation, and most of all about edges – beginnings not ends, passages not borders - the most interesting things in the universe, say the physicists, happen on edges (so do the ecologists). Several of the Sea Change projects are about the shared space of shorelines or edges. Mary Jane Lamond (who joined us at Ardtornish), Julie Fowlis and Mary Smith, 3 singers of island origin, have formed themselves into an archipelago for a Gaelic song project called *Às an Tràigh/From the Shore*, emphasising song tradition as a means of connection to a world in constant flux. Hanna Tuulikki's *Away with the Birds*, draws on Gaelic mimicry of bird sounds, placing the human voice within the natural soundscape, with an emphasis on listening, and on what we stand to lose if we turn deaf ears to our context. And in Barra, Steve Hurrell's digital mapping project focusses on gathering traditional names for features in the contested area of the Barra marine reserve.

On and offshore, the artists have been collecting materials like naturalists, extending their own knowledge through encounters with other people, in other places. Knowledge has been transferred between fisherman and artist, geographer and storyteller. It is developing this broader sense of context that helps to develop ideas that work in the world. And there are other connections elsewhere – GalGael which grew out of the loss of shipyards in Govan is now working with young people in Uist on coastal protection. The words host and guest grew out of a common root – it's natural and good for us to change places, share our knowledge.

Bird yarns. Deirdre Nelson

Deirdre Nelson, who once described herself as a "blow-in", did just that (with Mary Jane Lamond), arriving at Ardtornish from Mull on Saturday evening. A month in Mull had been spent devising a knitting pattern for an Arctic tern. Seabirds, their food sources disrupted by climate change, are becoming more sedentary, so the idea was to have a flock of knitted ones land on the pier at Tobermory, to teach us a lesson. The first job was to convert a googled pattern for a pigeon into an Arctic tern. Job done, one ball of Ardanish wool (from Mull) = 1 tern. (For comparison, Shetland women used to knit socks to trade for gin from Dutch fishermen, in which exchange 3 socks = 1 pint of gin). Terns' legs and feet are made of recycled plastic. Mull's "Woolly Wednesday" knitting group is on the job, alongside knitters in Coventry, Leamington Spa, Cape Breton, Arkansas, Caithness, and a few other hotspots, and the flock will be landing on the pier next month.

More to think on here, about the space we share in our diaspora across the planet, through simple activities, old skills and like concerns, and via new technology. Similar habits of making things, similar tastes in landscapes, and people all over the place glad to do something about the plight of seabirds. The evening's ceilidh affirmed the sense of sharing space – a good fire, music, a little whisky, and an all-voices, hand-holding, arm-swinging shot at a Gaelic song.

Sunday morning

Digital/physical - living together in the space between. Bill Thompson and Katie Thornburrow

This joint presentation was in the form of a conversation (or argument?) about the extent to which our experience of time and space in the digital sphere can transform our understanding and use of

the real world. Does new media offer new possibilities in design and planning of how to share our uses of the physical space? – to what extent? what are the limits to its application? How might this apply to the ART's interest in finding ways in which overlapping and possibly incompatible uses of space – whether buildings, landscape, settlements, wilderness or ocean – can be reconciled?

First, some very honest observations from Katie about the differences that strike a southern visitor to the Highlands: that the space in the landscape is because the terrain has been vacated over history; how deer, which from an external perspective might “seem to be nice creatures”, are the source of much tension; and that hydro is simply making the best of the weather! As an architect (and see [Cambridge Architectural Research Ltd](#)) Katie's work is all about shared space, making it fit the needs of those who inhabit it – parents, children, communities – and making it fit in terms of sustainability. Renovation of existing buildings starts with a survey, which is the process of “discovering what we've got”. Her tools are the drawing board and her computer, and her skills are in interpreting and communicating the desires of clients and other stakeholders.

Bill's point is that there are so many ways that digital technology can help with this. Services via mobile phone technology are available everywhere, and let us overlay our perception of the real world with additional data, allowing for more sophisticated engagement. For example, *Instagram* lets you upload photos to the interwebs, and with the app *Layar* you can search for all photos taken at a certain location (so, instant access to a photo taken from the roof of Ardtornish house last year). There's all sorts of information out there, if one knows about it – see also the fascinating [Where does my money go?](#).

But (Katie) there's technology and there's appropriate technology. Ardtornish house had its own electric supply over 100 years ago, early underfloor heating, and the first telephone in the area – all achieved without an iPhone. Yes (Bill), but the tools exist now – let us do what we currently do, but do it better, more effectively or smoothly or at lower cost. The hydro turbine is the same technology as 100 years ago but the control systems that prevent breakdown are completely modern. Before the earthquake there were no good maps of Haiti, but within a month of the disaster a set of digital maps had been produced – why wait for disaster? Digital satellite technology lets us monitor environmental damage and instrument the landscape which helps to make choices at smaller scales, and think on a richer basis.

Some examples from Bill for the Scottish context. We could tag deer so that we would know where they were and how many of them without having to track them. We could supply mountain bikers with portable tags to go with their GPSs (assuming they had them), so that walkers could consult their iPhones (same assumption) to know when they were in danger of being run down. Some such technology is already out there - “smart dust” is little plastic pebbles scattered on American forest floors, which contain a temperature sensor and wireless connectivity and can talk to each other, sense the environment and warn of fire. One problem is that deer eat them! Technology isn't going to solve our problems, it's people who will, but technology “used with a good heart” can enhance our ability to co-exist in this world. Can Katie see ways this could change her practice?

Her response is restrained. Yes, *Dropbox* is useful for sharing files. Yes, Bill has introduced her to lots of new technology. She does also go round at night turning off all his gadgets.

Discussion

Dangerous to get so used to feeling the feedback (Twitter and all) that we forget to feel the experience. Yes – but we evolve mechanisms to deal with this - when out for a meal with friends, stack the mobiles – first person to touch theirs pays the bill.

On deer – we do the counting and tracking (physically) anyway (that's not the problem). And putting technology onto something natural is to increase our distance from it – it's a disconnect, a barrier, when what we need is more connection (need to love the natural world to save the planet). Mountain biker mapping idea is hell! – watching your iPhone makes you blind to the world you're walking in. And would bikers take more care or feel secure to take less if they thought the onus to look out was on the walkers?

Technology is addictive to youngsters, and its ubiquity is alarming. Not just youngsters who are vulnerable – grown men use Satnav to find their own homes, because it's there! A Gaelic website project in Nova Scotia to gather cultural information meant that people stopped talking to each other about anything except the website.

More (information) is not necessarily better - the quality of much that is on the internet or Twitter is low, it's often false information. We have a responsibility to discuss the morality, the norms and standards of digital info, to verify what purports to be true – but there's no concerted effort to do that yet. Further, don't let's forget that uncertainty, chance and not knowing things is good for us, stimulates us to ask and invent. Don't let's have technology for the sake of it. Too many things are over-engineered just because we can and someone somewhere thought it was a good idea. How valid was their thinking, how impartial, funded and driven by what interests? The best tools are invented by the people who need them.

Appropriate technology – a shepherd's family in Morvern stayed on in an old house on condition of getting a telephone. But their son was crippled by TB. It wasn't the phone they needed – it was a freezer, for better nutrition. Pre-electric Nova Scotians (1949) exchanged information through constant visiting. Having heard lots about electricity they thought it would be marvellous – labour-saving, so would allow lots more time for visiting. But the TV came with it and the visiting dwindled away.

Sufficiently advanced technology is not magic, it's boring and invisible. We more often use technology to make bad systems slightly better, rather than to develop new good systems. Great big modern sawmills with computerised controls and laser defect scanning are amazingly efficient in terms of cubic metres of wood processed per annum. And result in big diesel lorries travelling hundreds of miles on single track roads to reach them. Local harvesting operations and local use would be much lower tech (and different), much more sustainable, locally appropriate and useful, virtuous. Our hierarchy of decision-making should consider local value before export. Yes – end to end thinking is vital. Indian farmers are now using their mobiles to check prices of products, so not getting ripped off by middlemen.

Closing discussion

(for which we shifted ourselves in the space, forming a big ring, which immediately disrupted our sense of ourselves as an audience, distributing the responsibility for speech equally round the room).

Making maps of conflict (like the Barra marine map) makes people's different expectations visual – a role for artists here. The dog film did this too – everyone's viewpoint came across and one could then understand them all. The author can't constrain the reading of the text – space is defined by its uses and we need to accept and work with those. We must not lecture (from our trenches) how space may be used.

Nice egalitarianism in this group, however disparate the backgrounds. Lets one see others' points of view, but also that one's own may not be right! But things aren't often like this. On the use of the garden as a neutral space to bring artists and scientists together (Sera's presentation), and also on the concepts of play, lightness, open-ness (Simon's presentation) - these are forms of engagement which are inclusive and don't pre-suppose a level of knowledge. How might they be applied in traditionally divided areas of government policy? Policy makers are often urban, so we need to be creative in sharing rural spaces (knowledge, experiences) with them too. (Or make more policy ourselves).

Shared spaces are not necessarily physical – for instance the marine park cuts across traditions and oral knowledge. If we do it right we respect traditions. Like Greenspace, working in urban Scotland, layering the history of people's relationships with parks or derelict land (some things may be easier in cities?). We have too much of a boundary/gulf between the "folk university" and the power and knowledge held at elite levels – need more extension, convergence. Folk knowledge (all our experiences and learning) is a squandered resource in policy making. A community project in Govan found that people knew they had all the information they needed amongst themselves, they just needed an invitation to start. (And interestingly, when asked what makes their community a thriving one, the majority of responses had the same 2 answers – they acknowledge each other in the street, and there are animals about).

In the UK, teaching is didactic and hierarchical, but Scandinavians believe everyone has the knowledge they need to participate in decision making. Every community has the right to government support to establish folk high schools and study groups – wind power policy in Denmark was developed by such study groups. New funding for night schools in Nova Scotia brought an appreciative letter to the papers. And a reply – ceilidhs are night schools.

The deer versus trees debate is ostensibly held on scientific terms, but the background stuff is emotion. And at present, Scottish papers are full of emotional letters about the loss of sheep from the hills – which is ironic – Highlanders defending the instrument of clearance, forgetting their own history.

On sharing – there are limits. It used to be the 7:84; we are now probably in the 1% that gets 99% of the world's wealth. People who have don't want to share equally. But a very little sharing locally (eg 5ha of land for a community out of a 1000ha FC plantation) can be transformative. So the first step need not be (threatening) egalitarianism, it's just about slightly upping the stake of the wee people.

On land ownership, Eigg is community owned (as of 15 years), with its own (off-grid) renewable energy supply. The idea of private land ownership is anathema to some. Yet the mission and values of Ardtornish are almost identical to Eigg's. Shared space is about shared values. Maybe ownership doesn't matter? But Ardtornish and Eigg are not typical, and a historical perspective would take us beyond the comfort of this weekend's shared space. Our ancestors left Africa because it was easier to move than to share. Now that we can't move, the challenge is to get civilised about conflict.

Sharing language (English, or technical language) can be difficult but is essential for international teams working on the issues threatening migratory birds. But specialist languages (scientific, academic, economic, policy) can be exclusive - specialists often use ordinary words differently, making them hard to understand. And specialist communities (especially academic and technical) rarely get to grips with how to articulate and create space for understanding the emotions that are vested in so many human issues – we mustn't let the complexity of language mask emotion. The biologist EO Wilson talked of consilience – the convergence or concordance of evidence from unrelated sources, to strong conclusions – more of that is needed.

Boundaries has been a recurrent theme - breaking them down, and indeed beefing them up (beating the bounds). Strange things can happen when we are out on the edge, practising the art of cooperation, whether knitting terns, or making technologies or theatre – sometimes things meet, interweave, sometimes a new species is born.

One thing very present at these Ardtornish weekends is a shared sense of purpose. Interesting how the Scottish government describes [its purpose](#) “To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish...”. Good words these, and “flourishing” might be more desirable than happiness somehow, a term worth exploring. But the government thinks it can attain this by “increasing sustainable economic growth”. Coming down a level to the stated objectives of the various government directorates, one sees how this chimera is effected. Disparate parts of the Scottish community who don't share a sense of purpose can each find words to justify and support their activities, whatever the conflict with others.

But governments can be expected to try to be all things to all people (voters). So different interpretations of the purpose might not be a problem, provided we keep checking back on where we're going, with reference to the main intent. Maybe we should be more relaxed about where we're going, like the ART is.

The Norwegian constitution embodies values which are detectable throughout public policy. Egalitarianism is a core value there, translated on the ground by small local government structure, small land ownership units. Scotland has lost its local democracy and (a few good examples notwithstanding) local control of its land. Natural assets need to be in the hands of the people as much as possible. A comparison of the health and prosperity of Norwegian and Scottish communities bears witness to this. But concerned land owners fear that land given away won't be properly used. Then again, what do we consider to be proper use, whose views are most valid?

The ownership of land doesn't matter, it's stewardship that counts. Try telling that to the people of Eigg! How often the difficult edgy things are about power and privilege. Past land ownership was what drove Eigg to be what it is today.

On matters of morality in business and banking, and the question of growth - how do we begin the necessary exchange without falling back into stale and bitter dialogue? Devolution of power back to where we can reach it, making it accountable to us, scaling government to fit with real scales of communities, is one answer. Let's have our elected representatives close enough to clobber them if they misbehave. Allotments is devolution too - giving people power and control they hadn't expected to have. The science proves this - giving decision-making powers to poor communities in Glasgow resulted in a change in the metabolites in their blood.

But devolution shouldn't be a power-giving exercise - it needs to come from the bottom up. (A process historically wrought by revolution). Local democracy might not work that well - the Forestry Commission identified bits of land they wanted to sell and sent information to community councils, but they were not competent to deal with it. (Not surprising really, with no statutory powers and very little funding, so little expected of them they have atrophied).

The intricacies of local communities are so affected by national and global powers, the "big economic picture". The future of the Lochaline sandmine is about commodity prices. It was imperatives of WWII that opened it, and now its sand goes for glass in solar panels. There was a community-led initiative to buy it, but Tarmac didn't want to sell. In Norway, the local community could levy taxes on it, or insist on ownership.

Some things have to be centralised or globalised - you can't make iPhones in a workshop in Lochaline. But how many iPhones do we really want, especially when we reckon the real costs? And that's another problem/answer - paying what things are really worth, all of it, and so discovering what we can't afford.

Sometimes the global perspective is a useful jolt of reality - 50% of Ethiopians are under 16 years of age - they are going to want to share space too.

A thought to take home

On the scales of how we think, work and engage with each other, and the scale of our anxieties about the world, we need to be humble about our capacity to influence and to remember our place. When all else is impossible, it is still (and always) virtuous to dig the garden or knit (and note the connection between humus and humility). We have more capacity in ourselves than we know, and it's grounded and practical for where we are.