

# *Sustaining Time:*

**exploring the emergent times of alternative  
economies**

**Case Studies Research Report**

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**An AHRC Care for the Future Exploratory Project**



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# Project Overview

*Sustaining Time: Exploring the emergent times of alternative economies* ran from February 2013 to October 2013 and was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of their *Care for the Future* Exploratory Awards. Its central aim was to ask whether shifts towards more sustainable economies might also bring with them shifts in experiences of time. Broadly speaking, if industrial capitalism was linked with clock time, and late capitalism with a speeded up, 24/7 networked time, what would be the time of a sustainable economy?

In a context where any hope of a speedy recovery from the 2008 economic crisis is increasingly untenable, there has been an explosion of interest around alternatives to the dominant capitalist model. Focusing on the potential of collaborative relationships, rather than ones based on competition, proponents of the new economics are exploring gift economies, peer-to-peer paradigms, shared consumption, crowd-funding and cooperative models. Already, there are hints that this work does bring with it broad shifts in senses of time. The move from narratives of unending growth towards more sustainable visions of steady-state futures is a good example. While looking more closely at movements such as Slow Food, Permaculture or Transition Towns, shows an effort to reconfigure daily life around slower tempos and non-linear models of social change.

Given that the idea of time can often seem obscure, a core aim of this project was to initiate conversations about the role of time in sustainable economies with a wide range of individuals and organisations with a view to developing a larger research project that could meet a range of identified needs. In order to do this we have produced a range of materials, of which this report is a part. It provides an initial overview of results from ten case studies completed as part of the project, as well as some interim conclusions.

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## **Case Study Participants**

Full Circle  
Growing Abundance  
Lammas  
Netuxo  
Open Shed  
Regather  
Restart  
Webarchitects  
Wildwon

# 1. Introduction

This is a report based on the initial analysis of case study materials created as part of the AHRC-funded *Sustaining Time* project. The aim of the case study research was to assess whether current attempts to develop alternative economies might be producing challenges to dominant forms of time. We were also interested in building links with projects and organisations with a view to potentially developing further collaborative projects.

# 2. Methodology

Potential case studies were identified at the start of the project in collaboration with the project's advisory board. There were 10 in total, with 6 based in the UK and 4 based in Australia. A potential project in Greece was identified, but unfortunately the timings did not work out (!). We aim to include examples of transition enterprises, co-operatives and permaculture projects. We also selected some cases in order to target specific themes e.g. craft practices or non-traditional co-op businesses. While the UK projects were identified primarily through recommendations, the Australian projects were identified through web searches around collaborative economies and alternative economies.

Case studies included organisations involved in:

- fostering cultures of repair and reuse (Restart, Regather, Open Shed, Growing Abundance)
- co-operatives (Webarchitects, Regather, Netuxo)
- permaculture (Lammas, Growing Abundance)
- Transition Enterprises (Webarchitects, Restart, Growing Abundance)
- developing more sustainable approaches to IT and electronics (Restart, Webarchitects, Netuxo, Open Shed)
- an ecovillage (Lammas)
- supporting local food (Lammas, Regather, Full Circle, Growing Abundance)
- sustainable events management (Wildwon)
- collaborative consumption (Open Shed)
- co-working spaces (Regather)

All case studies involved at least one hour-long semi-structured interview, most often with groups of participants, while some were with individuals. Preparation for these interviews included some documentation review, for example organisational websites, media reports, etc. Seven of the case studies involved participant observation. The time spent with each organisation varied but was generally around two days. Some visits were only for an afternoon (e.g. to attend a particular event), while one visit was for just under a week.

The themes selected as a framework for the interviews were developed from initial conversations held with the project advisers about their particular interests and concerns. Further questions were also incorporated from a previously funded project on time and

community ([Temporal Belongings](#)). Each of the topics were adapted to the particular organisation involved and in light of observations during the visit.

The case study research has produced a large amount of material, including over 20 hours of interviews. Sorting and collating the data is still continuing and as a result the current analysis is provisional. This report offers an overview of the range of responses given to the interview topics, as well as the identification of some further issues of interest that arose organically in the research.

### *3. Organisations Visited*

- 3.1. **Restart** is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and is also a Transition Enterprise. It promotes positive behaviour change by encouraging and empowering people to use their electronics longer. It was started by Janet Gunter and Ugo Vallauri in 2012. Currently one of their key activities is hosting Restart Parties where community members bring items in for repair with volunteer 'Restarters'. They are also involved in promoting the practice of repair more widely, including developing support for quality professional repair, and more awareness around repair-ability for electronic items.
- 3.2. **Webarchitects** is a multi-stakeholder co-operative based in Sheffield and has been in operation since 1998. The co-op provides a variety of IT services. This includes developing, maintaining and hosting servers and websites, and coding and customising content management systems. Their aim is to provide internet based services for socially responsible groups and individuals, using free open source software wherever possible, in a manner that aims to minimise fossil fuel usage and ecological impacts and which also provides sustainable employment.
- 3.3. **Regather** is a trading co-operative based in Sheffield that was incorporated in 2010 but which had earlier activities stretching back to 2001. Its aim is to support the development of a mutual local economy by providing resources for individuals to develop projects that adhere to co-operative values and principles. Regather offer a 'trade account' which includes support and services such as specialised spaces and equipment - kitchen, classroom, studio and workshop, plus services for events, education, food and enterprise.
- 3.4. **Lammas** is an eco-village in south-west Wales started in 2009. It was the first to be granted planning permission under the One Planet Development Policy. It consists of 9 smallholdings supported by a range of peripheral projects and networks. It combines the traditional smallholding model with the latest innovations in environmental design, green technology and permaculture.
- 3.5. **Netuxo** is a worker's cooperative based in London that provides websites and associated services to small groups, NGOs and business. They specialise in building sites using the Drupal Content Management System, a free/open source software, and maintaining and developing sites built with Drupal.
- 3.6. **Full Circle** is an informal collaboration based in Sydney, Australia that celebrates coming together to share thoughtfully sourced and ethically produced food amongst friends and like-minded people. For the last three years they have been holding food events, big, festive, secret dinners in unique, urban locations, factories, warehouses

and farms. They run pop up 'soupy' in public spaces, and also cook for private events. They source and grow their own produce, work in collaboration with farmers, include wild foods and try to make everything by hand and with care. They also work on publications, farm field trips, exhibitions, cooking demos and classes, including cheese-making classes which were the particular focus of this case study.

- 3.7. **Growing Abundance** is an initiative of the Castlemaine Community House in Victoria, Australia, that aims to minimise waste, reduce food miles, support local farmers and strengthen the local community and economy. They support a variety of enterprises that are funded primarily through grants, including a free local-food community lunch, a local food guide and cooking, growing and harvesting courses. They have recently won the tender to run a local school's canteen through their Castlemaine Abundance Kitchen Enterprise (C.A.K.E.) and will be providing local sourced meals. Growing Abundance works in partnership with Transition Mount Alexander and is inspired by the Transition and Permaculture movements.
- 3.8. **Wildwon** are a proprietary limited company based in Sydney, Australia that has been trading since 2012. Their main service is experience design, in particular, applying these principles to event planning and production. Their aim is to inspire, incubate and embed positive change for a better world today. Social and sustainable values are core to their business and they seek to model ways of moving towards a more positive future. Their events seek to connect people with new ideas around sustainability, food and social and community innovation.
- 3.9. **Open Shed** is a collaborative consumption start-up based in Sydney, Australia that was started in 2011. They provide tools for individuals to rent out underutilised personal items such as tools, electronics and outdoor equipment. Their aim is to reduce consumption, build community and support the development of collaborative economies.
- 3.10. A further case study was conducted with a co-working space focused on materials reuse and recycling. They have chosen to remain anonymous for this project.

## 4. Themes Arising

### 4.1. Feeling of Time

*How does time 'feel,' what are the pressures, the time crunches, the relaxing or exciting times, what are the rhythms of people's work*

- 4.1.1. For most of the participants, time was often pressured, overwhelming and stressful. For some, this feeling of pressure was mitigated by the fact that they could often manage their own pace as they were working for themselves. However, while many people appreciated being able to do work they were intrinsically motivated to do, they noted that a downside was a tendency to work long hours.
- 4.1.2. Only two organisations described their time as being slower or more relaxed. Both sets of interviewees were very clear that this was deliberate, either because of previous experiences of being overworked, or concern about the

kind of business culture that is created when fast-paced work is expected. They also saw slowing down as particularly important for allowing time for learning and reflection. Finally, for one group the pace of their work wasn't described as either slow or fast, but as a more sustainable, steady, measured pace, which might involve working long hours, but not in a frantic way.

- 4.1.3. Timelessness or being in flow. A small number of participants described the importance of the experience of 'flow' for their work. Two interviewees who had been involved in IT project management drew on Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow to explain their experiences. Another organisation described this feeling as 'timelessness,' which referred to the feeling of being aware in the moment, rather than striving toward a future goal.
- 4.1.4. There were a number of examples of people focusing in on their bodily rhythms, including changes in energy, emotional states etc. For some these rhythms had changed, or were understood in different ways, as a result of their new work situation. Others expressed a desire to learn how to be more in tune with these rhythms, including how their personal experience changed in reference to the different seasons.
- 4.1.5. Time of community: the interviews included lots of comments about the time of community, which was often described as feeling slower or more drawn out. People talked about the need to remain open to unexpected interruptions in order to allow for relationship building. There was also a willingness to allow time for going through shared processes and for making decisions collectively. There was a recognition that adapting to this different pace might seem illogical from broader capitalist perspectives, but most saw community building as part of their core purpose. Some found the clash between the time of 'project work' and 'community work' difficult to manage, but also felt that it could be refreshing in some contexts.
- 4.1.6. The time of customers: Some interviewees discussed the way customers could make the pace of work feel more frantic by requiring faster response times. Related to this, there was interesting feedback from those involved in collaborative consumption who were critical of renters who mistakenly (in their view) tried to use a faster 'professional business time' and thus created a more stressful experience.

## 4.2. Pasts and Futures

*How do people think about the past and future, and how is this incorporated into their project. Where do they look to for inspiration? Are people drawing on the past in new ways? That is, are they 'thinking forward through the past'? How far into the future are they imagining?*

- 4.2.1. Many recognised that the dominant perception of the past is often negative. That is, things associated with the past can often be understood as old-fashioned, obsolete or undesirable. There were thus a range of insights into how to avoid and/or challenge these conceptions of the past. Some people were very cautious about saying that they might be drawing on the past for inspiration and gave a variety of reasons for this, including not wanting to see old-fashioned, or criticising the way nostalgia might hide negative aspects of the past (e.g. Victory Gardens as a form of propaganda). For one group the past

was described as a negative weight that they were keen to get away from, associating it with the rise of industrial capitalism and the loss of commons. Others were very quick to say that they were inspired by the past. This included drawing on indigenous philosophies, cultivating greater sense of connection with ancestors or other wisdoms seen to be located in the past. Relationships with the past could be read through the landscape and the material remains of previous generations' connection to the land. Wider cultural criticisms of alternative movements for potentially 'sending us all back to the stone ages' were understood as a forceful taboo that placed prohibitions over which options that could be legitimately explored in the present and future.

- 4.2.2. One response was to develop more sophisticated accounts of how a movement could combine the past with the future. So despite not wanting their projects to be too closely associated with the past, people did argue that certain aspects of the past were in danger of being lost and needed to be rescued in order to produce a better future. In fact, this loss of connection with the past was thought to hinder the way into the future. Some were explicit about seeking to combine the best of the past with the best of the future.
- 4.2.3. Even so for most participants the emphasis was on the need to look to the future, to create new visions and to model progressive options. Too much nostalgia risked losing the opportunity to create something new. For example, users of Openshed described feeling as if they were participating in a 'historic moment' and were excited about the new possibilities offered by the technology. They saw collaborative consumption as representing a new future, because it allowed sharing outside of the traditional focus on close personal circles.
- 4.2.4. An emphasis on working within longer time horizons was widespread. The idea of thinking forward 'seven generations' was an inspiration to a number of groups, with one group mentioning further examples of long-term thinking including the story of the Oxford oak trees, and the film *Into Eternity*. Advantages of using long-term frameworks for one group included being able to develop projects more slowly and feeling a greater sense of possibility because they didn't feel pressured to do everything at once.

#### 4.3. Critical Temporalities

*Are organisations deliberately trying to shift people's expectations around time or help them to experience time differently? Is the development of 'alternative' times seen to be integral to the work of the business or organisation?*

- 4.3.1. Challenging cultures of instant gratification was the key intervention identified in the study, and was evident in almost all of the projects in a variety of ways. Examples included:
  - Learning to value the time it takes to do a repair, or to rent rather than buy, rather than seeing this as wasted time. Not looking for a quick fix.
  - In place of the thrill of constantly upgrading electronic devices, there was a trend towards developing longer term relationships with the items we own.
  - Educating customers about the time of open source software, which can't always offer instant solutions because it is based on volunteer

contributions, by focusing instead on the other advantages open source can offer.

- Learning to enjoy intermittent availability, particularly in relation to seasonally available food. Not feeling pressured to have everything available at all times.
- Slowing down in order to cook foods from scratch. This included lovely stories about people's uneasy reactions to the 'time of ricotta' and the range of techniques developed to help people feel more comfortable with this.

4.3.2. Moving away from techniques developed by mainstream companies to secure their future income streams by locking-in customers. This was particularly evident within IT and was linked to their commitment to using open-source, but other businesses were also wary of using things like retainers to guarantee business. This suggests a greater comfort with a more open and unpredictable future.

4.3.3. There were a number of stories of people seeking to reclaim an experience of timelessness. So in place of the frantic pace that they used to experience (or saw others caught up in), people talked about their quality of life improving as they developed ways of living in the present and avoiding the push to always be striving for something else/better.

4.3.4. Challenging the time of the entrepreneur and the culture of overwork.

4.3.5. Deliberately cultivating a better sense of one's own time rather than being subject to institutional/bureaucratic time disciplines.

4.3.6. Valuing the time taken to reflect and learn, rather than seeing it as 'unproductive' time.

#### 4.4. Time/Money/Value

*A key element of the shift into industrial capitalism was the way time, money and value began to be related to each other in new ways. One legacy of this is the belief that the only time that is valuable is the time that is paid for, and the only valuable use of your time is to earn money. In our case study research we wanted to see whether organisations working towards alternative economies are questioning this and develop new relationships between time, money and value.*

4.4.1. All our interviewees stated that money is not a core value for them, and they expressed scepticism about money being an unmitigated good. There were quite a few examples of people downsizing, or deliberately choosing to reduce their time in paid work (and thus their income) in order to have time to do work they found more meaningful.

4.4.2. Related to this, there were a range of examples of people seeking to redefine what counted as a valuable return for their work. For example, one organisation was completing a Social Return on Investment (SROI) audit to make it easier to articulate the variety of benefits volunteers received and the organisation produced. Others talked about the intrinsic values of their work, and the value of feeling that you are involved in trying to make the world a better place.

4.4.3. One organisation using task-based billing rather than hourly billing, specifically because this reduced the pressure on them to maximise income and they could then enjoy their work more.

- 4.4.4. One consequence of putting less value on money was needing to deal with criticisms from others about the choices they are making. Participants described being called 'crazy' or 'insane' for volunteering (working for free) and for giving up potential income. Working without pay was sometimes seen by others as a form of self-exploitation. One way of dealing with this was to suggest that critics had misguided expectations of what was needed to live a good life, or were unnecessarily trying to 'keep up with the Jones's'. Another approach to these kinds of criticisms was to question the logic that said that watching TV or shopping were acceptable unpaid activities, while activities that seemed productive weren't.
- 4.4.5. Indeed many said they were often very happy to work without pay when doing something intrinsically meaningful. A couple of participants argued that the best experiences can't be bought, and only rarely is anyone paid for doing the things that they find most fulfilling in their lives. However when work is less meaning , or feels like a chore, then there was much more of an expectation that they should receive pay for it. An important caveat here is that people were happy to volunteer, but primarily when personal finances were not causing anxiety. For those whose involvement was dependent on welfare payments this was predictably described as a key problem they struggled with.
- 4.4.6. Indeed many noted that because they understood value in quite a broad way, rather than primarily as money or profit, they also needed to be careful that they weren't doing too much pro bono work. They talked about needed to 'face reality' and to recognise that they did want their businesses to be profitable.
- 4.4.7. Following on from this, there were a range of concerns about inequalities created when there were pay differentials in an organisation. Particularly when some were paid and others were contributing substantially, but as volunteers.
- 4.4.8. Interestingly, although people were often comfortable about their own volunteer work (though not always), some expressed discomfort around accepting volunteered work from others, preferring to be able to pay those contributing to the organisation. Recognising the contradiction, one response was to try to understand these acts of giving and receiving within a broader community context. That is, community was understood as a web or weave that individuals contributed to and drew support from, without necessarily creating obligations between specific individuals.
- 4.4.9. Importantly, even with the general orientation away from maximising income, many participants still struggled with the way self-worth is tied to salary-size. Their incomes were often much lower than they would have been in more mainstream jobs or businesses and at times people caught themselves feeling undervalued due to their lower salary. At the same time, they recognised that these feelings didn't seem to fit with their broader values.

#### 4.5. Scheduling and Co-ordination

*How are people thinking about work schedules? What systems are they using to coordinate work? How do they manage potential clashes or synchronies between different schedules? How long are people working for?*

- 4.5.1. Everyone interviewed seemed to work every day or nearly every day. Sometimes this was because individuals were holding down other jobs so they

could support themselves while their business was being developed. Flexibility appeared to be particularly important, with many critical of 9-5 and rarely, if ever, working in jobs that required this kind of routine.

- 4.5.2. Most made some effort to curtail tendencies towards overworking, though this was rarely articulated as a core aim. For example:
- Blocking off particular times/days to do other activities. (Though some also blocked in time to work more).
  - Trying to develop organisational cultures that discourage burnout/overwork.
  - Using time-dairies to get a better sense of their activity over the week.
  - Only one clear example of someone leaving their previous job and starting a new business in order to reduce their work hours.
- 4.5.3. There were a couple of examples where people pushed back against those advising them to work less. Part of the argument for this was that individuals had the right to decide for themselves how much they wanted to work. However others mentioned that in doing so, individuals might be inadvertently pressuring co-workers to do longer hours. Having set working hours as a possible corrective was more likely to be associated with bureaucracy and as undermining autonomy and flexibility.
- 4.5.4. Even with the focus on flexibility, there were still examples of people feeling guilty when not working 'proper' hours. This was particularly seen in the ecovillage case study, where people discussed the conflicts between industrial and natural time. Cycles of work were linked with the weather and the seasons, rather than being the same every day. Learning to work with these different cycles could feel transgressive, with an underlying worry that they might get 'caught out' for not following the time patterns of wider society. Those who felt free from this kind of guilt put it down to many years of deliberate effort to transform indoctrinated beliefs around time.
- 4.5.5. While everyone seemed to have high expectations around their own workloads, expectations were different when scheduling for others, particularly for service users, volunteers, project participants etc. Thus when scheduling work people would take a variety of factors into account, for example avoiding asking volunteers to do too much on the weekends, and planning in slack for when volunteers aren't able to show up, or arrive late/leave early. Some had to reduce their expectations around how quickly they could ask volunteers to respond to requests and to allow things to take longer than they might have hoped.
- 4.5.6. There were a number of examples of schedules overrunning because people were 'in the zone'. Work that was meaningful and enjoyable was hard to keep within set times. A good example of this was in relation to repair work, where people could get so engrossed in problem solving that wider timescales were forgotten.
- 4.5.7. The distinction between work and leisure was vague for many people.
- 4.5.8. A variety of mismatches between schedules were identified. Within individual organisations there were often a lot of different projects that might work to quite different timeframes. Particularly interesting was the way the time of a project or business might be out of synch with wider external rhythms. In the eco-village case study, interviewees talked about becoming detached from weekly cycles

and the timeframes of the wider community (e.g. opening and closing times for businesses or services). This was generally seen as a problem, but there were examples where being out of synch with wider business rhythms could be an advantage. For example, when selling value-added products. Local/seasonal goods often sold well and so could occupy a particular economic niche without having to adhere to wider industrial or commercial rhythms of constant supply.

#### 4.6. Finding time to build alternative economies

*What kind of time is needed to do this kind of work? How does it relate to people's life stages, career breaks or various support systems?*

4.6.1. Most people already had a history of working a variety of jobs, whether self-employed, part-time or consultancy based etc. There were three examples of people quitting their full-time jobs in order to start their new businesses. This was because of threats of redundancy and/or feeling that they wanted to do something more meaningful. Two developed their new businesses while still working, while one quit and downsized considerably in order to spend time on business development.

4.6.2. Many talked about the importance of not having other responsibilities, particularly not having children, or having children who were older and more independent.

4.6.3. Some had savings or reduced bills, but not all.

4.6.4. Only one mentioned making the change because of a particular life stage (turning 40).

4.6.5. Different issues affected those who were not part of the core team. Some groups of volunteers were more likely to only work part-time, while other groups talked about the difficulty of finding time to meet their commitments due to busy schedules. Attendees at one-off events (e.g. courses) used the impetus of a special occasion in order to make time to attend, or felt freer to attend when there were reassurances that no further commitment would be required.

#### 4.7. Change/Progress/Development

*Linear models of time suggest that change happens through the steady activity of individuals working according to a plan. This idea is linked with broader ideas of progress where the future is supposed to always be better than the past. Ideas of tipping points, systems theory and chaos theory, however, suggest that change is non-linear, and that the future is not so predictable. Are these ideas influencing how people that are developing alternative economies think about change and progress?*

4.7.1. There was very little mention of the idea of tipping points when talking about broader social change. Instead quite a few people saw social change as an incremental process.

4.7.2. The future was very open for most people, particularly in relation to their own businesses or projects. Generally people used an experimental approach and were happy to see where new approaches might take them rather than trying to stick to a predetermined long-term plan.

4.7.3. Alternatively, others felt it was very important to develop a clear vision of the future they desired. But this was more connected to ideas of visioning and manifesting the future, rather than aiming for linear step-by-step plans.

- 4.7.4. Other ways of thinking about the time of social change including an emphasis on being able to seize the 'right moment'. So rather than seeing every moment as offering relatively the same possibilities for making change, particular times were seen to be more promising than others.
- 4.7.5. Here again the opposite could also be found, where people also talked about needing to start where you are, rather than waiting for everything to be ready and lined up to go before starting to act.
- 4.7.6. One group talked about the way different modes of change were intertwined, such as incremental, chaotic, adaptive.
- 4.7.7. I also asked each group about the idea of a steady-state economy and particularly whether they thought you could still have creativity and dynamism within a resource constrained economy. Their responses merit a longer analysis, but – to give an initial idea – this question was often met with laughter and confusion. One group joked that this concern could only come from people living in a city, since it seemed so different to their experience of the natural world. They suggested that seeing dynamism as linked only to unending growth was tied to a fixation with aspiring and/or striving, and to a teleological (goal-oriented) approach to time. A non-linear idea of dynamism would be quite different. One example given for how to think about creativity within limits was the experience of performing a dance. A dance can be creative, while also constrained to a set rules, and is also much more about enjoying the moment.

## 5. *Other issues arising*

Further issues that have emerged in our initial analysis include:

- The time of exchange. There were abundant examples within the case study research of efforts to shift away from smooth, instantaneous transactions, in favour of longer interactions that might support storytelling, skill sharing and community building.
- A different relationship to materials. With the wide focus on reuse, the time of material objects also turned out to be really fascinating. Items were understood to have their own complex histories that were often hidden from the humans working with them or using them. They also had an uncertain relationship to the future as they started to be reused in new situations. Sharing objects could make them more valuable as they gained new stories and more layered histories.
- The time needed to build community. Supporting stronger communities was very much a core interest for all of the businesses involved. Finding the time to do this work was thus an important issue. This included 'finding time' in a straightforward way, that is time in terms of quantity, but also the right kind of time in a qualitative sense, i.e. time that felt relaxed and enjoyable and that wasn't subject to pressures to be constantly productive.
- To some extent there is a real poverty of words and stories available to us for talking about time and understanding its different aspects. When I talked about the idea of *kairos* for example, one person was frustrated that this and other terms were not part of our standard education. Ways of talking about time that arose organically within the case studies included, Jay Griffiths' book about time,

*Pip, Pip*, which nearly everyone mentioned, and ideas about ‘seven generations’, and the Oxford oak trees, already mentioned above.

I also followed up more specifically on the ‘time of co-operatives’ and the ‘time of permaculture’. Only the first has so far been reviewed, with some of the key issues being:

- The relationship of the Cooperative to its history and to possible futures.
  - The history of co-ops was important for one group, with photos for the Rochdale pioneers displayed prominently in their workplace. In discussion, this group said that while they were inspired by this past, and saw it as a history they could learn from, there were also excited about where they might take things in the future. They talked about how this past wasn’t perfect, but that it seemed like the right time to start working through these issues and others that co-operatives are currently facing.
- Commenting on the idea that the co-operative ideal might seem outdated, one interviewee pointed out that co-operative ideas were actually only developed in the fairly recent past, and that human nature hadn’t changed so much that we couldn’t share similar ideas. They also pointed to the vagaries of history and suggested that perhaps in the future the 21<sup>st</sup> century model of capitalism might be thought of as being old-fashioned and out of touch.
- Are co-operative principles still relevant today, particularly in industries that more often represent the future such as IT?
  - For one co-op, the core values and ideas remain very relevant, and they argued that they probably always have been, it’s just that “people’s levels of acceptance of them vary”. The political edge offered by co-operatives was seen to be particularly important. That is, the co-operative model offered a practical way of working towards their political aims in a context where none of the major parties represented their beliefs.
  - Another group saw quite strong links between co-ops and the current-day open source movement.
  - I had also noticed that two IT focused co-ops used the ‘made by hand’ co-operative logo. I commented on how this seem to evoke past craft traditions and how this might fit with their work. Both claimed that the idea of craft fit well with IT work. For example, websites might be handwritten, and both offered a bespoke service that avoided outsourcing.

## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1. The range of attitudes towards time, and variation in people’s experience of it, suggest that there is no single ‘sustainable time’. As was to be expected, the case studies instead showed that each organisation is entangled within multiple kinds of times that have to be negotiated in a variety of ways.
- 6.2. The pressure to be continuously productive and associated ideals of the ‘hard worker’, appear to remain a significant force in people’s lives, even if this ‘productivity’ is shifted towards building more sustainable futures rather than making more money.

- 6.3. It would have been interesting to use more creative methods in the case study research in order to draw out different aspects of people's experiences of time. Sometimes it was hard to get the particular aspect of time across to the people I was working with. In the focus groups and interviews, there were a few times where I worried that I was 'leading the witness' when explaining the aspect of time that I was asking people about. It was interesting to see which questions the groups 'got' immediately and which just didn't seem to make sense. This varied across the case studies, rather than there being certain ones that stood out as being particularly problematic.
- 6.4. Issues around status anxiety and not breaking taboos around time were an interesting issue bubbling under the surface. It would seem important to explore this further, and look at the individual and social psychologies of developing and implementing critical approaches time, including the techniques people use to respond to social pressures around time.
- 6.5. The case study visits for this project were often very short and so it would be important to be able to spend a longer time with organisations, partly to be clearer about how practices might differ from ideals, and also to get a better sense of the multiple rhythms of an organisation and how they interact.